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SALVIA
RICHMOND

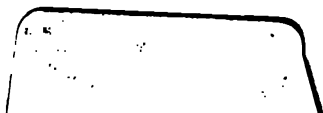




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SALVIA RICHMOND.

A Novel.

"And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?"—GENESIS xxv. 31, 32.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON,
NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1878.

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251. e. 584.



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SALVIA RICHMOND.



CHAPTER I.

LANDLORD AND LAWYER.

AFTER Ivory had in his pleasant and genial way exploded the bombshell of Julian's sale in the morning-room of Redburn Priory, and had retired from his interview with the baronet, with the substantial honours of the encounter—for in a person of Mr. Ivory's bulk, his temporary subsidence behind the table could only proceed from that better part of valour, which wished to restrain the baronet from any practical outbreak of temper; after, we say, that most light-hearted of Shylocks had wended his pedestrian way towards his newly taken Tamerton Cottage,

Sir Sidney had instantly communicated with Mr. Satchell, of Gray's Inn Square, and of the firm of Dubbin, Rust, and Satchell. And, after having taken a week to see the London representatives of Ivory and Co., at their office in the city, Mr. Satchell had written to say, that he would run down for the day to Blankshire, and talk over the new aspect of affairs with his client.

And, inasmuch as Mr. Satchell rose with the lark, had there been any larks in Gray's Inn Square to compete with in early rising, the six o'clock morning train from Quatre Bras Terminus was to deliver Mr. Satchell per first class at Sir Sidney's gate by noon or soon after. And as the kitchen out-door bell at the Priory had already pealed for mid-day and gardeners' dinner hour, and still Satchell had not arrived; Sir Sidney, who was trifling with the current number of the *Western Juno*, and had re-read for the sixth time a report of his own speech at the Leatherbarrow flower show, became somewhat fidgety. So, tossing the newspaper aside,

he came to the large bay window to watch for the approaching wheels of the delaying solicitor.

Sir Sidney looked out across his lawns and cedars, and tracked the sinuous windings of the carriage-road on to the battlemented lodge gate at the end of the great avenue. Nothing legal or likely to carry a legal freight was visible along the soft middle distance of sward and low-bending boughs. The thrush sang as wildly and mellowly as ever, not seeming to mind a tittle that he and his remote descendants had been sold to a City firm. The deer grazed just as well, though his grandson's haunch would now go to Leadenhall Market, instead of gracing the board of the bishop of the diocese. The leaves grew just as green, though their boles, which had been owned by a Leyland for five hundred years, might to-morrow feel the axe of an alien usurer.

There is only one human form visible in the landscape, and this is a lean and skimpily attired cottage dame, poorest of the poor

amongst the squalid Blankshire peasantry. She is a pensioner of the great house; she receives out-door relief from the draff and sweepings of the tables of the servants' hall of Dives. She advances but slowly, for the wind is against her, and she is weak—a mother of miseries and nine scrofulous children. She carries a tin can, enswathed in a linen cloth to keep fast the rickety lid. This is her day of banquet and replenishment. For, on stated mornings, of which this is one, rations of thin soup are distributed by the bounty of the Priory cook to the most indigent and meritorious of the serfs who dwell upon Sir Sidney's broad domain. Poor old creature! What havoc the merry breezes are making with her flimsy draperies! What a rag of humanity she is! What a phantom of premature decrepitude! She has married and brought up children; she has worked in the miry fields; she has tied faggots in the dripping winter woods. Adam's curse of manual labour has in Blankshire also descended upon his Eve. She has lived her life

—such as it was—and done her duty fairly, as the lowest citizen in the commonwealth of Nature; and now behold her on the brink of her great sleep, soliciting intermittent broth from a baronet's scullion!

The head of all the Leylands militant or sporting upon earth; the representative of all the Leylands who have “gone to the majority,” and now lie coffined in glory under Redburn Church chancel; the finished handsome gentleman, ringed and oiled and laven-dered like a woman, watching at his bay window, notes perforce this thin and toiling form of the soup-seeker. She is the anti-masque among all this territorial prosperity. She ought and she ought not to be there. That sleek, antlered stag, pasturing in her path, utterly declines to move for her, and sends her half a dozen yards round to avoid him. How much more comfortable the beast's life is than hers! Sir Sidney is surveying her with infinite condescension, not untinged with increasing self-complacency. This wreck of what woman ought to be, is an eye-

sore in the prospect. True! But she suggests to the baronet that he is really a very charitable man, and that the house of Leyland is a great local centre of almsgiving and munificence. Has not the most proterve bull been hewn asunder every Christmas since the memory of man, and distributed piece-meal on the good old principle, "that unto him that hath shall be given?"—for Sir Sidney's own bloated bailiff always got the tenderest and the largest joint, while this Betty Briggs, of the outermost lanes, with nine children, always got the tail and feet. Did not six old paupers receive at the same festival six coats of immemorial cut, to wear as livery badges of the great house, with brass buttons like mirrors? and did not the six insidious old paupers incontinently pawn their six coats, sooner than go clothed in the duffel of retainership?—the hoary ingrates! Yes, the house of Leyland did its charities with a somewhat careless and unequal palm. And the house of Leyland certainly took its left hand, and indeed the whole neighbour-

•

hood, into its confidence, when its right hand bestowed a basin of soup. And just a horn or two were blown, when the Christmas charity coals were allotted and the charity flannel was rent.

But these are merely our own cynical suggestions. Sir Sidney did not see the family benevolences from this seamy side. He thought, on the contrary, as he watched the soup pauper, that if the race of Jacob supplanted the Leyland blue Norman blood, that doles of coal, hewn bulls, and bright-buttoned coats would be done away with, and that the good days of England would be almost sped. He thought that the morning wish and evening orison of every poor man in Redburn parish towards the good old race, which had dominated and relieved him so long, should be *esto perpetua* !

A shade of vexation at Satchell's tardiness overswept the fading colours of this beautiful mental picture ; but this vexation did not last long, for the trap which bore the lawyer hove presently in sight, drawn by a high-

stepping mare, and piloted by one of the Priory grooms. The off-wheel grazed poor Mrs. Briggs, who numbered deafness among the other amenities of her existence, and covered her with splashes of mud. But Satchell and his driver swept on unheeding. They were late and muddy themselves; and the Blankshire roads were, in the groom's vernacular, in the devil of a state.

The dog-cart dived into the laurels and aucubas, which masked the pleasure-ground round the house, and became lost to the baronet's view. Sir Sidney disposed himself in a statesmanlike attitude to receive his legal adviser. In five minutes Mr. Satchell came again to the surface with a knock at Sir Sidney's drawing-room door.

Mr. Dryden Satchell entered, as requested, and disclosed himself, on nearer inspection, as rather tall and rather elderly, with an attenuated, vulpine face, sharp nose, and receding chin. Nearly bald was Mr. Satchell, but with two wisps of indefinite drab-coloured hair, brushed forwards over each ear. Thin were

his lips ; in fact, he had hardly any lips at all. He was lean and stooped, but agile and quick in his gestures. He had a pinched and chilly expression, which suggested cold and hunger, a look not uncommon with his tribe. His eyes were fine and piercing, but rather deeply set, and cavernous. He wore an old-fashioned swallow-tailed coat, tightly buttoned across his chest, a limp, white necktie, and a pair of pepper-and-salt trowsers.

Said Mr. Satchell on his entrance, "Sir Sidney, I trust you are well. I appear before you in a condition wholly without precedent. Never in my professional career do I recall arriving before a gentleman and a client in a state so—sprinkled. These Blankshire lanes are really, if I may be permitted the expression, inverted mud-shower baths. I do not think that Mr. Rust, my partner in town, would at the present moment recognize me—at least, not off-hand. My clerk Hickory might do so ; but he sees me at various disadvantages from calling me and bringing up my shaving water. Mr. Dubbin I cannot

answer for; inasmuch as Mr. Dubbin has been for many years in Highgate cemetery. We find his name still influential in legal circles; *magni nominis umbra*, Sir Sidney, and therefore we retain it on our door-plate. And having now just run over my firm, I again apologize for my appearance."

Sir Sidney assured him that in those parts traces of travel were necessary evils; that on him (the baronet) alone rested the blame, if any, for omitting to send a closed carriage to Stembury station.

"You are very good, Sir Sidney," simpered the solicitor. "I am glad I have not to present myself before Lady Leyland in my present mottled garb. Your butler would not brush me; he told me I must dry first. He seems a practical man."

Would Mr. Satchell take a biscuit and a glass of sherry? Mr. Satchell preferred to take business first, and a reversional glass of sherry afterwards.

Sir Sidney, being quite at his service, struck a parliamentary attitude, and mo-

tioned Mr. Satchell to take a chair, and begin.

The lawyer took only the outer edge of one, whereupon he sat blinking and spotted, looking like an uncomfortable panther. "I shall take the liberty of disposing my documents around me," Satchell next observed, with a kind of inward sniff.

This he accordingly did, by arranging four chairs at regular intervals, in a kind of Druidical circle round the seat which he himself occupied. These being adjusted to his satisfaction, he fished up a numerous and jingling brotherhood of keys from his trowsers pocket; and, selecting a stumpy little Benjamin from their brood, laid open his black bag and exhumed therefrom some dozen packets, of which he doled out about three to each chair. This done, he rubbed his hands, and claimed Sir Sidney's attention with a cough.

The baronet, commanding the hearth-rug, with his hands clasped beneath his coat-tails, nodded to the attorney permission to proceed. "You have seen Mr. Ivory?"

"I have seen his firm, Sir Sidney, several times."

"Are there more rascals than one?"

"No, Sir Sidney. Ivory is alone *quâ* the profits of the business. But, I mean, I have seen his clerks and London staff. The head of the firm is at Tamerton, in this county, and, I fancy, in this neighbourhood."

"Already? Confound the fellow! What energy he has! Well, you saw somebody?"

"Sir Sidney, I did; and better, or rather worse, I saw your nephew's deed of sale and the last deed of re-settlement, as arranged between your late brother Thomas and yourself, which Ivory now keeps as his title deed—both originals and quite satisfactory, or, in our view, I should rather say," with a feeble smile, "quite unsatisfactory."

Sir Sidney winced at these unpalatable tidings, and rubbed his finely chiselled mouth in evident annoyance. "I had hoped," he observed, with a frown, "for intelligence more encouraging, although the fellow's impudent assurance in this room made me fear

that all had been done shipshape. Then, I may take it from you, Mr. Satchell, that you think this infamous bargain will stand?"

"I will not deceive you," replied the lawyer, scanning his client in a somewhat corvine manner, with his head on one side, "I never raise false hopes. When our weather-glass points to 'stormy,' I decline to tell a client 'set fair.' This deed is as solid as the Bank of England."

"You bring cold comfort, indeed!" fumed the other. "But, supposing the conveyance itself impregnable, is there nothing to carp at outside this document?"

"I wish Mr. Ivory had given just half the purchase-money—not from any desire to save that rascal's pockets——" sighed Satchell.

"He can take care of himself surely!" was Sir Sidney's testy interruption.

"No one better," concurred the solicitor, grimly. "But the point of my wish lay in quite another direction. One disastrous element of the case against us is, that their price was, considering drawbacks, a very fair one."

“Drawbacks!” echoed the baronet, in irate amazement.

“The mortgages,” suggested Satchell, mildly, “created by—— Well, we will say, already created.”

Sir Sidney strode once or twice up and down the apartment, and then broke out, “I can see no fairness under any aspect in such a transaction as this. The soul of every English gentleman revolts at the mere mention of such a sale. I will not cavil or consider how, where, or when such an atrocity is perpetrated. Parliament ought to prohibit these famishing Esaus from selling a thing so sacred as a birthright. Folks will sell their titles next.”

“I said,” repeated Satchell, scraping his chin, “their price was fair, considering the heavy encumbrances already subsisting on the Redburn estate. I really think, bringing these into account, and your own excellent state of health, Sir Sidney, and the known longevity of the family, that eight thousand pounds was—ahem—a very fair price indeed.

Had the amount been inadequate, we might have asked Equity to allow us to set aside the bargain on that ground. Equity so far protects Esau—I adopt your illustration, Sir Sidney—as to insist that the soup should be fairly worth the birthright.”

“Humph!” replied the baronet, gloomily. “Then is nothing to be done? You know this fellow has planted himself at my gate, to watch and drop down on me, if I fell a stick of timber. He will blab the nature of his interest in my estate the first time his self-importance is wounded by any of the neighbours. Am I to fold my hands and bear this? Can’t you quibble, Mr. Satchell, raise difficulties, fight them, step by step, and inch by inch, pick holes, ask questions, require evidence, deny everything? I am not a lawyer, Mr. Satchell, but you must know what I mean.”

“I apprehend your meaning perfectly,” said Satchell, with a dry smile of intelligence; “but if we lose the suit in the long run, the more trouble we give now, the heavier bill we shall have to pay then.”

"Have you nothing to propose?"

"I have, Sir Sidney."

The baronet brightened at this, and begged Satchell to mention his expedient.

"I propose," Satchell pursued, taking up the first cromlech of papers on the first chair, "to take stock of the situation, and to see where we are."

"As you please," agreed Sir Sidney, disconcerted and looking considerably crestfallen. "It seems, however, like thrashing wheat twice over. But, as you please, Mr. Satchell. Pray proceed."

And this was Mr. Satchell's recital.

"In June last, Sir Sidney, you came to my office in Gray's Inn Square, bearing a telegram from the Brighton police; and, in consequence of your instructions and its contents, I went down by train to Brighton on that very afternoon. The telegram had been somewhat delayed, I may state, through having been addressed to you at Redburn Priory; whereas, it being then the very height of the London season, you were,

as a man of fashion, naturally in town. However, I lost no time in repairing to the scene of action, or rather—he! he!—of immersion; and learnt at the Brighton police-station that a coastguard of the name of Steyning had discovered the unclaimed clothes of a bather between Aldrington gas works and Kingston, on the coast westwards from the town. In the coat pocket was an envelope directed to Julian Leyland, at 63, Seymour Street, Islington, and re-directed on to 102, Burlington Street, Marine Parade, Brighton. There were also two towels from the lodging-house lying near the garments. I proceeded first to the coastguard station, and saw Steyning, but elicited from him nothing which the police had not previously ascertained. No body had been found, or had come to shore. Steyning believed that when your nephew entered the water, the tide was running out fast. Steyning added that most of the bodies of men drowned upon that coast were recovered; but he had known instances to the contrary. Bodies, as

he put it, were unsystematic and unaccountable. I could, therefore, only direct a bright look-out to be kept along the coast-line during the next few weeks. Nothing, as you know, Sir Sidney, transpired. I went down with Mrs. Dredge, about ten days afterwards, to see if we could make anything of a body stranded on Bognor rocks. But Mrs. Dredge was strongly of opinion that this was not your nephew; though, if these remains had not floated about quite so long, she would have had more to go upon. In fact, all recognition had been washed out of what we inspected at Bognor. But you may take it, Sir Sidney, as an assumed fact, that no body has or will be found. I have taken this part of the subject out of its chronological order, to conclude, what I may call, the *morgue* branch of my investigation."

"I rather want comment than narrative, Mr. Satchell," Sir Sidney here interposed; "and I would gladly learn, whether you consider this fact of my nephew's body not having come to shore as in itself suspicious."

"I will recur to that presently," said Satchell, fretting a little under the interruption. "When I sum up the evidence, I shall dovetail the absence of the body with another absence; and, when taken together, I shall think the two circumstances suspicious, although each non-appearance, when isolated, is hardly so. With regard to your preference of comment to narrative, Sir Sidney, I hardly take you."

"I merely meant," said the baronet, suppressing a yawn, "that the newspapers and your written reports have already placed me in full possession of the sequence of events connected with this—tragedy. Now, though it is a great advantage to hear these occurrences re-stated with your admirable legal lucidity, I should even more value your inferences and results."

"You are very good, Sir Sidney, said Satchell, mollified; "and I will bear your hint in mind. To proceed: From Steyning's house, or rather from his planked domicile, I took the Cliftonville omnibus to 102, Bur-

lington Street, on the East Cliff, and there I saw Mrs. Hoppy and such articles as belonged to her missing lodger. I summarize what she told me. To the two towels she would swear in a court of justice; her lodger had kept regular hours, and paid her regularly; he had, to her knowledge, no acquaintances in Brighton; died very little in her debt, and there were no claims for provisions or that class of sundries which the occupants of her apartments usually incurred. The gentleman was not well dressed, but he seemed to have plenty of money. On one occasion she had seen him through the key-hole counting a bundle of bank-notes. She had been induced to look from hearing a curious crisping sound in her front parlour, for which she could not account. Otherwise, she always respected her lodgers' privacy. She could not say where the bank-notes were now. Certainly, she had found nothing of the kind among the effects of the deceased. The incumbent of the chapel at the back could speak for her character. Her late lodger

complained incessantly of his bad health, but he seemed to her to think himself a good deal worse than he really was; although, if he was bound to be drowned, it did not matter now whether he was well or ill before it. I give you the woman's own rambling words from my notes, Sir Sidney. On one day the lodger came back ill from bathing, and said he had been subject to a numbness—she clearly meant the cramp, Sir Sidney—and asked if she had any brandy in the house—which was a thing she never touched; but there did happen to be some, quite accidentally, that day in her cupboard; and she was thankful, for the poor gentleman's sake, who is now dead and gone, that it was so. She had not much else to say at all to the point. She complained of what she called the harass she had gone through; and represented that she was ready to scream, whenever the door bell rang, expecting your nephew to walk in (as she put it), dripping. She also represented that it had gone against her apartments, having lodgers drowned from

them, and that she had been forced to lower her rents. But all this is not material. I brought away what papers and effects I found on her premises, and made her reasonable compensation."

"A man would not take bank-notes out to bathe with him," reasoned Sir Sidney, with an incredulous smile. "You conclude, of course, that the landlady pirated this bundle?"

"Quite the reverse," was Satchell's prompt rejoinder. "Mrs. Hoppy never laid a finger on the paper money. I go by this. There was neither need nor obligation for her to mention at all having seen Julian count the missing packet. To tender such a piece of evidence, knowing the notes were not forthcoming among the effects, convinces me of her innocence. That ends the Brighton part of my inquiry." And the lawyer passed from the contents of the first chair of his Stonehenge to the more heavily piled seat of his second. "We now come to 63, Seymour Street, Islington, the lodging-house, as you know of

Mrs. Dredge. Your nephew had been domiciled here for several years, in fact, during most of his married life. Except that he was poor and usually in arrear with his rent, Mrs. Dredge had nothing but good to say of him. She knew of Julian being at Burlington Street, Brighton (a material point, to my mind). She had corresponded with him while there. She believed him to be, when he left town, really and seriously ill. His doctor (I saw the doctor) bore out Mrs. Dredge in this. Doubtless, Julian improved with the change of air, for I have given you a different estimate of his health from Mrs. Hoppy. Everything in Julian's room at Islington I found in perfect order. Among the letters which he had left, I was enabled to trace the history of his monetary relations with Ivory and Co., from their first loan to him of five pounds on his chairs, down to the appointment for completing the sale of the Redburn reversion. A tin deed-box, now transplanted to my office, contained—one might say in a nut-shell—all Julian's legal

documents, most of which had belonged to the Reverend Thomas Leyland, your worthy brother, before him."

"To whom I owe bitter thanks," spake the baronet, unfraternally; "a hard, clerical bargainer. He has ruined the family." Sir Sidney, in his wrathful remembrance, quite forgot whose misdeeds had rendered the bargain necessary.

"I wish we could have dealt with this young man ourselves," observed Satchell. His narrative was done, and now he passed to comment.

"I regarded this fellow as a *cretin*," said Sir Sidney, with an unpleasant curl of the lip. "I did not think he had spirit enough to dispose of this reversion."

The lawyer opened his eyes rather widely at this, and observed drily, "When one can get eight thousand pounds by signing one's name, a man must be mean-spirited indeed to fear to dip his pen in the ink."

"You do not quite take me," explained the baronet, airily. "My nephew was a com-

plete muff, a fellow of infinite scruples and hesitations, with no devil in him whatever; I thought I might trust to his doing—nothing!”

“I see perfectly what you mean now,” answered the lawyer, coughing behind his hand, “and I think, roughly speaking, you were right—that your nephew did lack the decision of character necessary to take a step so, shall we say, revolutionary, as regards the future of the Leyland posterity. This man would have lived in obscurity, and, as I may venture to put it, never have used the sting which Nature—I mean inheritance—had given him, except for one disturbing factor in our calculation—hunger! Pardon me, if—your metaphor—we recur to Esau again.”

“He should have borne it like a gentleman,” said Sir Sidney, waving the trifling inconvenience off with a motion of his white and jewelled hand. “Why did not the fellow work? But neither Julian nor his father before him could exact any respect or make their presence felt in a room. Some people,

my dear Mr. Satchell, are born gentlemen," with a glance into the pier-glass, "and some are not. Some are worthy of the position to which they are born, some, with good enough blood in their veins, slouch through life like waiters or ushers in a school. It is a national misfortune, when the power over large landed estates is vested by some unforeseen accident in such nonentities. I fear that there are very few gentlemen of the old school left among us." And the baronet sighed, again waved his hand, and arranged his side hair.

"Still, Sir Sidney, you know I always advised you to come to terms with your nephew," put in the lawyer, deferentially.

"Sir, you did!" said the great man, swelling with tempersome importance; "and doubtless your advice was, professionally speaking, sound. Had I been a cheesemonger, and this estate a cheesemonger's business, I should have directed you to buy out my nephew at any price. But, as I am a gentleman, and this is my ancestral estate, I did not choose to stoop to the condescension

which treating with this snob would have necessitated. I do not ask favours, Mr. Satchell, of my inferiors."

"These views are very much to your credit," responded the lawyer, with a dubious gulp; "very much so, indeed, I am sure. And at the present day quite unusual and refreshing. Ahem! Am I, then, to understand that you would consider any proposal of compromise with Ivory and Co. derogatory to—ahem—your position?"

"The case is quite different," said Sir Sidney, rather petulantly. "Ivory is a tradesman, and there can be no equality or comparison between him and me. My nephew, though unworthy of his position, was a Leyland still. To him I could stoop; to this tradesman, or to my bootmaker, I cannot. Come to terms with Ivory, if possible."

"I now have my instructions," nodded the lawyer, plying his pencil, and murmuring like a melancholy echo, as he wrote, "Ivory and Co. Terms, if possible."

"Assuming from our earlier conversation that we cannot upset the deed of sale, I assent to, indeed, I see nothing but, compromise," said Sir Sidney, biting his lip. "But why not dispute the deed first, and compromise as a last expedient?"

"Because," insisted the lawyer, with some approach to natural emotion, "it will be merely wasting our cash. It will be firing legal powder and shot at an ironclad, or endeavouring to bring down an elephant with an air-gun."

"Upon my word, Mr. Satchell, you are not encouraging!" exclaimed Sir Sidney, with a movement of irritation.

"My good sir, that deed was drawn by the best conveyancing talent in England. Ivory and Co. do business on a large scale. They retain the best real property counsel, men who know far more about land than half the Lord Chancellors who have sat on the wool-sack. Land, you and I know, Sir Sidney, is like nothing else. Ivory and Co. have bought up reversions before this one—though none,

probably, of the same importance. They know all the leakages and weak points in such transactions. Their specialty is Expectation in difficulties. Every needy heir in the United Kingdom has received their circulars. This deed is right and tight, and will defy all the professional ordnance which we can bring to bear against it."

"Would the price of his purchase, with two thousand added for his bargain, think you, tempt the vulture?" inquired Sir Sidney, with an imprecation.

"He would not swoop at that," was the lawyer's verdict. "Ivory is spending freely at Tamerton. He might be lured by twenty thousand," added Satchell, meditatively. "But, do you know, Sir Sidney, though I have taken down your instructions to compromise, I hardly think I had better act upon those directions just yet. Let us wait. Trust me, Sir Sidney, and let us wait. Let me see you again in six weeks. Meantime, I shall not go near this money-lender, or make him any kind of bid. I will write him, in fact, a

vague sort of letter, leading him to suppose that we recognize the bargain and stoically acquiesce in the situation. We must not show ourselves too eager. Time, I rather think, is on our side. At least, I cannot see what harm a slight delay can do us——”

“Or what good,” interposed Sir Sidney, tartly.

“I want to wait and watch,” Satchell pursued, in a slow, dogged way. “I want to test this firm and learn all about them. I want to hit them through some questionable transaction of theirs in the past. I am trusting to time to answer questions in this affair, which I told you, Sir Sidney, I should recur to. And though I see no flaw in the deed, there may be, as you say, a flaw outside the deed. Therefore, time may reply to one or to both my queries in a manner inconvenient to Rupert Ivory, and then—we will pounce!” stabbing the centre of one of the chair-cushions with his silver pencil-case.

“What are your questions for the oracle of

futurity to solve, Mr. Satchell?" This was asked with a hardly disguised sneer.

"Where is your nephew's body?" said the man of law, turning abruptly on his questioner.

"Don't ask me!" cried Sir Sidney, startled out of his well-bred apathy; "ask the fishes, Mr. Satchell."

"Number one," said Satchell, calmly, crossing off a memorandum.

"And the next?"

"Number two. Where are your nephew's eight thousand pounds? The fishes cannot have eaten them."

Sir Sidney suggested that the money had been spent, given away, flung away, squandered broadcast, frittered, muddled, lavished, dissipated—or hidden.

"Unlike your nephew—all of them," was Satchell's comment, with a head-shake. "Now, listen to me, Sir Sidney. This man leaves a usurer's office with his pockets stuffed with cash. At Brighton, a few weeks later, he is still flush of bank-notes. He is

drowned—accidentally, let us trust—and not five pounds in money is found belonging to him.”

“We are coming to something at last,” said the baronet, with a sarcastic smile.

The lawyer may have thought so too, but he merely screwed up his mouth and bowed. “*I have a theory*,” he confessed in a grudging reluctant way, paying the words out like a miser does his money; “but lawyers have no business with theories, when there is not a tittle of evidence, as yet, for my weak hypothesis to lean upon. You have been hard upon me, Sir Sidney. In fact, clients are always hard; they will not be patient enough. They expect Rome to be built—forum, capitol, temples, and public buildings generally—in an afternoon. Your manner shows that you expected me to arrive with some golden egg of discovery. I have found out nothing. Give me another six weeks. As to my theory—it may be all romance and moonshine—I should prefer to return to Gray’s Inn Square without stating it. Mr. Rust

and the late Mr. Dubbin would not, I am sure, in its present embryonic state, present it to a client."

"As a favour," begged Sir Sidney, "let me be taken into your theoretic confidence. I accept your coming statement with all due reserve."

"I think, then," said Satchell, without moving a muscle of his face, "that Julian Leyland was robbed; and that, on discovering the fact, he drowned himself."

The baronet sprang from his chair. "Not by Ivory?" he ejaculated, with his hand on Satchell's arm. "If we could hang that fellow, I would pledge Redburn to the hilt to twist his rope."

"I mean quite another man," responded the lawyer, unsympathetically—"one Gilbert Archer, who has disappeared to Australia. He was Julian's fast friend."

"The name sounds somehow familiar," meditated Sir Sidney.

"I have written to this Archer on the subject," said Satchell, naively.

"Bless the man!" exclaimed his client. "You hardly expect him (this Archer) to write back, and let you know how he did the deed?"

"I expect nothing," rejoined Satchell, drily. "I have not a vestige of evidence; yet I wish to hear Mr. Archer's views on a subject, with which he is certainly much mixed up."

"Why did you not tell me all this at first?" grumbled the baronet, fretfully arranging his neckcloth.

"It is quite informal my telling you now. No evidence—not a grain! Besides, it does not affect the main issue."

"For goodness sake do speak plainer, Satchell."

"Ivory's title to Redburn is the same, whether Julian was robbed or unrobbed, whether Julian was drowned or—suicided. I fear the last word, Sir Sidney, is not in Dr. Johnson's excellent dictionary."

"Damn Johnson! I want to hear more. Hark'ee, Mr. Satchell, your professional

coolness is really exasperating. But why go to this Archer—this, what's his name, in the bush?—while you have such a blood-sucker as this Ivory in the hand? The usurer, trust me, had Julian watched from his office door and tracked down to Brighton. The 'best burglarious talent in the kingdom' is employed to watch Julian and his landlady out or asleep, and the notes are back in a week in Ivory's safe. What say you?"

"I will think over your suggestion, Sir Sidney," said the lawyer, beginning to repack his black bag most methodically. "I will think it over. But I do not fancy this would be in Ivory's way of business; I really do not think it would. We shall hear what Gilbert Archer says; at least, if my letter ever reaches him."

"But he must be found," Sir Sidney insisted, with some vehemence.

"If we do find him, he will probably be innocent."

"A tantalizing alternative, truly!" put in the baronet.

"You can't tantalize a lawyer," Satchell observed.

"I spoke from the client's point of view," laughed Sir Sidney, rather grimly. "Then it is settled that we make Ivory no offer yet, and that you sift the new criminal aspects of this affair thoroughly—mind, Satchell—thoroughly. I wish no expense spared. And now let us join Lady Leyland and my nephew in the luncheon-room."

"I am fairly dry," said the lawyer, testing a speck on his knee. "Might I request the favour of your butler and a clothes-brush?"

"Since you insist," said Sir Sidney, ringing the bell.

"You mentioned nephew," hazarded the lawyer, dropping his voice, as they were moving towards the door. "That will be, I presume, Mr. Richard Leyland."

"Exactly. You shall be duly presented to him."

"Let me take the freedom, as the family adviser, Sir Sidney, to say that I am both surprised and gratified to find that Richard Leyland is down here."

“Ay, ay,” replied the baronet, airily; “there is no harm in the boy. His visit here is more her ladyship’s doing than mine. The neighbours have discussed this other affair pretty freely. When a fellow is drowned, he puts one in the wrong with some fools, though why death gives merit where none was before, I see not. Still, her ladyship suggested that we ought to rally our kith and kin round us, under the circumstances, and the lad is here. Logwood, let Mr. Satchell be brushed.”

CHAPTER II.

TO A BROTHER OF THE PEN.

Richard Leyland to Davenant Browne.

“MY DEAR DAVENANT,

“Here at length I write my promised, but deferred, account of myself and my Blankshire doings. To make up for my delay you shall have a long letter, high-flown, random, egotistical. I have not a soul down here to whom I can impart my experiences with the freedom of friendship; therefore I must, perforce, talk to you through the long tube of the post-office.

“The new life, the *vita nuova* in the southwest, is full of the strangest surprises. I might have stepped out upon a new planet. All things within me and without me have

suffered change. I hardly seem the same person, even to myself. A month ago behold me among the least of those who wrote for the *Lucubrator*, whose able critic you are, and whose thunderbolts you now sit forging, as you gaze over the glazed roofs of Covent Garden. I recline in a canopy of stately cedars, and watch the deer feeding, have retainers at my beck and call ; in fact, am living at the rate of ten thousand a year, with all the delights and none of the annoyances which the possession of such an income entails. A month back, I looked to you as my chief patron, to throw into my way such little cast-off bits of literary hack-work as the pen of the great critic had not time to pierce ; I lived upon the broken meat from your richer and fuller table ; I was a very Lazarus, and even, now and then, the dogs of the opposition journal—— But I will not run the poor simile off its legs, as it is the vice of all my tribe to do.

“ Well, you have read the above remarks to yourself, my dear Davenant ; you have

given one of your well-known growls, and surely have you thought, 'Dick Leyland's head is being turned very fast with the glories of his uncle's place, and Dick Leyland means to turn his back on literature, and Dick Leyland is only writing this to vaunt to us in the Egypt of our captivity about the honey and cedars of his Blankshire land of promise!' My worthy Davenant, you are wrong. I take the goods of Dame Fortune while they last, but I keep my head from vertigo. I regard all here as pleasant and, likely enough, evanescent pictures, panoramas of life, a series of dissolving and soon to be dissolved views. When the bell rings and the curtain falls, why I shall contentedly rise and come back to my three-legged stool, my scissors, and paste-pot. Another month may see me back again, not a whit the better off than when I started. Then I shall kiss my hand to the fair melting form of the goddess of Antium, and listen to the lessening clangour of her retreating wings. I shall thank her for my summer holiday, for show-

ing me glimpses of a life which I had only read of or dreamt about ; I shall then philosophically enwrap myself in my own virtue, and acquiesce in honest poverty without gift or expectation. You open your eyes at this disclaimer ; but the truth ought to be told. I am only down here upon approval. My uncle told me as much yesterday. And, Lord bless you ! he won't approve of me. I shall be sent back to the shop (I mean your office), pampered yet penniless. I shall be declined, with thanks (or without them), by the squirearchy. They won't succeed in cutting my Bohemianism down into the lines of a country gentleman. I shall be back on your hands yet. This thought sobers me at the banquet, when gentlemen in mourning give me the alternative of sweet or dry champagne. This is my death's head, when gentlemen in powder tell me the phaeton waits to carry me a-shooting. I enter it sedately, and essay to guide the steeds of the sun with fingers as faltering as those of the boy of Apollo and Clymene ; but these beasts (thanks be to Jove !) know their

way, and the Blankshire lanes are void of traffic, and present little to run against ; so I have without collision as yet reached my journey's end.

“But all this is out of its order and proper place ; I must observe some kind of sequence in narrating my chances by Blankshire flood and field, or this letter may stretch till doomsday. And, first, as to the character of the inhabitants—I think that usually leads the way in books of travel. Well, Sir Sidney is a finished gentleman, rather self-repressed, much looked up to in this neighbourhood, and in his own house and grounds, ‘autocrator’ imperial and supreme. I never saw any one like him before ; as, indeed, how should I, considering where I have been brought up, and the folks with whom I have hitherto come in contact ? Glossop has hitherto been my ideal of a great man, and, indeed, the way Glossop receives a diffidently impudent and bashfully conceited young poet or *prosa-teur* is certainly very fine and imposing. At least, I thought so in my unenlightened days.

But hark ye, Davenant, by the bones of the eleven thousand virgins I swear it!—Glossop is pinchbeck, parcel-gilt, brummagem, electrotype, spurious, to Sir Sidney! You should see my uncle entertain the neighbouring clergy, and you should watch the small vicars swing their censors and sprinkle their incense before the shrine of Porphyrogenitus. But, seriously, the defects of my uncle's character seem to a great extent the outcome and consequences of the position in which he is placed. He has had his own way in everything; he is the petty god of a country neighbourhood. He has admitted neither brother nor rival near his throne. Hence (what marvel?) he is a bit of a Turk. If you rear a child as Amurath or Bajazet, do not complain, if the adult infant chops off a few heads, or bow-strings a few faithless but fair Circassians. The chief fault—I protest by Heaven it is so!—rests with the middle-class rural neighbours, and with the slavish attitude which they choose to assume towards the two or three magnates of their district.

“However, I am trenching upon questions which are fitter for a political pamphlet than a private letter. I have sketched you my uncle in rough pen and ink. You need fear no collision between us. I take nothing here upon myself. In all reasonable things I obey Sir Sidney to the letter. I follow his instructions to the inch, and take no ell of allowance. For instance, the other day, he told me to start with the keepers, beat Bromsgrove Cover, and return—directions sufficiently explicit. Now it so happened that Bromsgrove Wood only took two hours to accomplish, and, as it was barely two o’clock, the head-keeper wished me to enlarge Sir Sidney’s instructions, and beat Salkeld Gorse on our way homewards. I refused resolutely, and we were back at the Priory long before we were expected. Sir Sidney seemed pleased at my implicit obedience, but he neither felt nor expressed any regret that such obedience had spoilt my day’s sport. Indeed, my uncle is not a considerate man; but, then, neither of their

sultanic (I won't pun) majesties, Amurath or Bajazet, were considerate persons either. They had decision, the power of enforcing commands, a strong personal influence over great masses of men. If you or I, O Davenport Browne, were suddenly called to occupy the throne of Constantinople, we should lack woefully all these three great qualities, and our considerateness (Heaven save the mark!) would suggest our own instant taking off by our first grand vizier. So there is my uncle for you, not uncharitably portrayed, and there is his *raison d'être*.

“Now for my aunt, or rather my aunt-in-law, his wife. Well, I freely confess that I can't make out Lady Leyland. I read her differently every other day. I draw my conclusions and cancel them. I shall not know my aunt till I see her at a pinch; that is to say, I shall return to my goose-quill and ink-pot a month hence without knowing her at all, having only seen her surface. Shall I then describe her, as best I can, *ab externo*? No, I shall ask leave to keep this aunt-in-law

till my next number (I mean 'letter'; but the trick of my trade misled my pen). Davenant nods me consent, and I pass on.

"Chapter second. 'The Home of the Leylands.' Such a charming place this is! How can I cram into my page all its gim-cracks, bric-à-brac, oak bedsteads, tapestries, ghosts, blood stains on the floor, armorial windows, embossed chimney-pieces, ancestors by Vandyck, shepherdesses by Lely, cross-bows, morions, cups, and saucers. But hold, my panting muse! Invert Wardour Street, Haddon Hall, the Hôtel de Ville at Paris, shake out their contents, stir round rapidly with the scythe of Time, re-arrange *ad libitum* for a scene in 'Woodstock' or 'Kenilworth' dramatized; and you will get something like the effect produced upon the brain of the 'Occasional Correspondent' of the *Lucubra-tor*, when pitchforked suddenly in among the glories and gewgaws of Redburn Priory.

"Outside it is all verdure and gently sloping lawns. Groups of antlered deer and knots of dappled kine, peaceful, ruminative.

A calling of myriad rooks, who whirl above the gables and high lozenged casements of the south elevation, which Inigo Jones designed, and where 'rare Ben' is said to have slept on his way to—Heaven knows where. Such trees! not dreamt of in our London natural philosophy—such spreading islands and continents of foliage! I give you my word, nothing has pleased me more down here than the squirrels, in the first place. I had never seen one out of a treadmill cage in the Seven Dials; and here they peep down upon you at every wood-turn. *The keepers hate them.* Only imagine—how can we Cockneys imagine?—the inside of that man's mind who can hate a squirrel! You will laugh at my italics, but let them stand.

"I wrote—let me see —'squirrels in the first place,' and what in the second place? Prepare yourself, my good friend, if you have a vestige of Cockney wonder and Nature-worship left in your composition. I am convinced of this, that the Cockneys are, after all, the folks who appreciate Nature best. Certainly, the rustic

turns a dull and indifferent eye upon her wonders. Cockney school of poetry, quotha! Simply the best school of poetry in the universe. And now for what struck me dumb with wonder, in my second place. Why, the mistletoe! Every apple, lime, elm, in the park is rammed and crammed and jammed with mistletoe! I know this is too dithyrambic, but I can't write temperately. The smallest of Redburn Park's hundred glades or copses would supply all Covent Garden on St. Stephen's Day. Shades of Norma, and the long-stoled avengers narrowing in, and the Roman perfidy, and the black veil, and the crash of the final chorus! Shades of gentler reminiscence than the savageries of dead druids of Mona—the Christmas dance, the hospitable holly, the round game, the wassail cup, and good night to thy wan white partner under the charmed bush! O bough of ambrosial salutes, branch of lips immortal, seal of eternal vows!—and here you have it growing like groundsel on every doddered whitethorn. Is not that a surprise for you, Mr. Citizen?

“And this brings me to the next section of my letter; for mistletoe suggests—well, there is no great harm in the association—(Chapter three) ‘Young Ladies of Blankshire.’ I am in love with two already. It is best to have out an embarrassing announcement and have done with it. Why beat about the bush? I have said it, and I am not a bit ashamed of myself. I suppose the vast amount of park mistletoe has infected the atmosphere. But I don’t care a bit to make excuses. I glory in my infirmity. Transfix me (by return of post) with the shafts of your scorn. I shall not heed; the double embarrassment is far too delightful. And yet—sooth to say—I have sped most humiliatingly in one wooing, and have made no kind of progress with the other. You shall hear, friend of my bosom, all about it, or rather about them.

“And, let me premise, for the first nymph Glossop is answerable. I see you start, and hear your instant question—‘What earthly connection can exist between Glossop and Blankshire?’ My good friend, be composed.

Glossop is another Yggdrasil—he pervades the universe, and one of his roots reaches even down here to the frost-giants of Blankshire. It all came of his first ‘Wednesday,’ that literary crush to which you and I, in our insignificance—for who is great before Glossop?—were rather surprised to be invited. We went; of course we went; who among our nomadic brotherhood dare bide in his tent, or his gipsy cart, in his owl-nest at the ear of the zenith star, or in the Scythian waggon which makes his rolling home?—all must out when Glossop sends round the fiery cross. And happy is he, whose wedding garment lies not in durance at the sign of the Medici. We went; of course we went. There we found the *élite* of the intellectuals, the cream of the children of light. In that blaze, in that coruscation of the intelligences, you and I felt but two poor little glow-worms, whose ‘ineffectual torches’ were paled to less than rushlight gleam before the shining and cliff-like forehead of Minerva Stodge, who is reducing morality to mathe-


mathematical formulas, and invites subscriptions from a priest-ridden and unsubscriptive generation ; before the beaming Pharos-like spectacles of Professor Pongotius, the great pithecolologist, who has incontrovertibly shown that our species is a 'sport,' or abnormal variety of the more permanent and primeval ourang-outang.

"But why should I, a mere door-keeper in the house of Rimmon, dare even to catalogue these great sun-bright giants, these idols, Bell, Dagón, and their brood, to whom the book-world kneels, and whom all the reviews acclaim? Suffice it to remind you, that we there saw, nay, even crushed against, wrestled in staircase Penueles with, spilt lemonade over—lions dun and lions brown, lions great and lions small, lions that go with their manes in curl, and lions without any manes at all. Forgive this lame paraphrase of a stirring lyric! Well, in that sea of *geist*, you and I, faint tadpoles, essayed to swim. A strange babble was in our ears; this was the language of the elder gods, which to mere

mundane auricles sounds indistinct as the wind and the leaves jargoning together. My weak intelligence sickened in the excess of light, and I felt home-sick for my anterior Cimmeria. Heavenly Minerva grew too severe; I hankered after some more demotic Venus. I rolled my unsatisfied eyes around those gleaming halls of Ashdod.. A beautiful girl was leaning against a far-off doorway, her great sad eyes weary of Minerva, weary of Pongotius, of all the roarers, roarer's cubs, and all the leonine offspring under heaven. She spoke to no one, heeded no one, evidently longed only to be gone. To me among these stale unsexed she-intellec[t]s she seemed a fresh woodland Artemis, telling of stream and meadow, and sweet Dame Nature before the professoriate had set her right and squared her to their wisdom. She seemed a fawn of the woods, which had strayed and lost her way into the wide, cold, burnished courts of Wisdom; where the worshippers never say, '*I love,*' but only '*It is expedient.*' O Artemis, shedder of arrows of love, what

madest thou in the porches of that fane where no fresh breezes come; where men drink of the cisterns of jealousy and eat the bread of detraction? Should I not rescue her? By Heaven, what did I care for Euclid in petticoats, or for Socrates in long blue stockings? A simple pretty English girl of eighteen outweighs them all. Is she clever? God knows! Probably not. I never inquire. It is enough that she is charming. .

“Soon my opportunity came. The eldest Miss Glossop, newly enlarged from the toils of a lioness, who had just gone home with an ache in one of her terrible grinders—a female critic, I believe, an ogress who crunched tender young poetlings (thank Heaven for that retributive ache! it must have been the excessive sugar in the poor little creatures which induced it);—Miss Glossop, I say, returning from consigning Blunderborina to, I trust, a wakeful couch, was re-entering the upper apartments. I arrested the publisher’s daughter near the doorway where my Artemis languished, unnoticed and unadored. I



craved an introduction. Artemis became, under the name by which she chooses to be known to mortals, Miss Atherton, and with Miss Atherton I conversed—one might even say flirted, could Olympians flirt—for the rest of the evening. She set my wisdom-wearied thoughts to music, and in her voice, under the arid chandeliers of Bloomsbury, I seemed to hear the ripple of brooks and the singing of birds. There was one drawback—the mother of my nymph; she glared defiance at my most humble and respectful advances. Plainly, she would have nothing to say to me. Is it not always so? Every garden of the Hesperides must be dragon-guarded. Such tutelage enhances, after all, the prize. Mellow seem the apples, more golden-shadowed, enshrouded thus with peril and the impregnable. Who cares for the road-side crab, in reach of every ploughman's hand? But, all the same, Mrs. Atherton was most quietly exasperating. She thought nothing of your humble servant. Little wonder in that. She thought nothing of Bloomsbury. At this

wonder begins to dawn. She thought nothing of Glossop. Hear it, ye men and angels; and let wonder open her widest eyes!

“Well, against all these snubbings I bore up. If the daughter was kind, what mattered the scorn of the chaperon? The lions went downstairs and supped on raspberry ice and sandwiches. Thence home to their bars and straw. The party melted away. I saw Miss Atherton to her carriage. I went to bed, but not to oblivion of her features. I was a nuisance to my friends, yourself included, during the ensuing week, upon the subject of her perfections.

“To Glossop’s second ‘Wednesday’ the lions again arose from their litter, and came and fed. Their jackals yelped around them merrily as ever. But the eye of the room was gone—the apple of the orchard was missing: Miss Atherton came not. Clearly the counsels of the dragon had prevailed. Well, I haunted the quarter in which she lived, like a ghost which the clergy cannot exorcise. I was in all her paths, and succeeded in getting a few

hurried words in the streets thrice ; then I saw her no more. Days passed, and I became alarmed. I rushed to the private hotel where they had resided. The porter told me that the ladies whom I sought had left. Whither, thou hoary-headed porter, whither ? To which of the four wind-points of heaven ? I faint for thy reply. Much beer had enfeebled the memory of the hoary-headed one. He had forgotten the address. I laid too half-crowns across his hand. A gleam of reminiscence hovered at their touch for a second in his venerable eyes. Then Lethe re-assumed her reign, and he was blank as ever. I soon wished I had my half-crowns again ; but they were irrevocable. I paced sadly from the door. Time slipped on. Artemis (humiliating confession !) had begun to be forgotten. Then came the news of my cousin's drowning ; then my uncle's unexpected summons. My prospects seemed to brighten, and I took train down to Blankshire. At Stembury station I arrived. But, though on pleasure bent, my mind was frugal, as with the equestrian hero's


of Edmonton, and to save a cab—— But hold, my muse! that relates to quite another pair of shoes; in fact—but I will not anticipate. Let us take each young lady leisurely and in her appropriate order.

“So I had been in Blankshire some days, and was lounging with some keepers after rabbit-shooting in a little village street, when my destiny again caught me. A large woman, a wild, vehement woman, with straws, and the Lord knows what other agricultural produce, interwoven, Ophelia-like, in her tresses and head-dress, sprang, literally sprang, upon me. She claimed to have known me in infancy—a claim which I could neither allow nor repudiate. She inquired most tenderly after my aunt and uncle. She flung around me a sepia-cloud of incoherent questions; she brandished names I never knew, places I had never, since my first memory, visited. And now, weirdest chance of all! amid all this smoke and bray, she told me, pat out, the thing of all things in the world I most desired to know—that in a Blankshire valley, not

five miles distant, my Amaryllis of Glossop's doorway, my shepherdess of the shining locks, was abiding, and might be found any day by her but recently consoled Strephon, who had long and widely sought his nymph in vain. Nay, even this Mœnad would command a pink, little, shrinking Flamen, tender-eyed, love-lorn, to guide me, there and then, towards my Arcadia. Blankshire is a land of illusion and surprise. This convoy, however, I put aside. And so home with my uncle's warreners, meditating much of Destiny and Cupid's ups and downs.

“Next day beheld me on the road. I tore up in my speed the Redburn lanes—the metaphor is not more violent than was my impatience. But, alas! that left-handed crow on the last broken Spanish chestnut of my uncle's avenue croaked to me (I knew it) an omen of mischief. That little sallow stoat, crisping the currant bushes of the park lodge garden, ought to have turned me back, with auguries of impending disaster. But men will be wiser than Destiny! I held on, heeding not

raven or forest beast. A certain enchanted enclosure hove in sight. A clown told me it was called Tamerton Grange. I registered the name upon my soul in letters of gold. I was admitted. There sat my Artemis, radiant as the morning star, rosier than in Bloomsbury; the sweet airs and flower essences of her charmed garden lived in her brow and lips. Behind her, loomed and watched the dragon, working some dreadful toil or snare, in which to illaquate trespassers. The dragon would not salute me, would not converse, would only glare defiance, and keep on weaving her terrible nets. Miss Atherton (I really must take my stilts off) received me kindly—as kindly as she dared. But, with her mother in that mood, the poor girl might well be constrained and ill at ease. Things got stiffer and stiffer; and ceremony in Mrs. Atherton harshened into absolute rudeness. I cannot keep a cool head in such a social skirmish, and I must have said something in my flutter and awkwardness that gave deep umbrage to the elder lady. What this was



I cannot for the life of me recall. But Mrs. Atherton, without more ado, requested me to leave. Amaryllis began to cry. And out I marched, steeped in immeasurable shame. God knows for what they took me, or what harm they expected me to do! Then a young Blankshire gorilla, quite recently reclaimed for the purposes of domestic service, and with the roughness of his native boughs still harsh upon his hands, had orders to convoy me, closely guarded, down the Tamerton paddock, degraded and disconsolate; and, pushing me forth upon the dusty thoroughfare beyond, the ape brat slammed the gate and turned upon me the key of my Hesperides. O rightly auguring crow, why did I deserve such extrusion? To this hour I know not the reason of my banishment.

“ Well, I got back to the Priory, heated, out of sorts, and depressed considerably. In my first anger I had resolved to claim my aunt’s assistance in ascertaining from Mrs. Atherton the nature and the dimensions of my offence; but cooler reflection convinced

me that I had no right to involve Lady Leyland in a sentimental explanation less serious than absurd. So I have kept my discomfiture (excepting to thee) within my own breast. That roadway to Arcady I must not re-tread. The doves from these woods fly over the forbidden tower of Danae, but I must not follow their palpitating wings!

“’Tis time this letter should end, friend Browne, but I have not done with you yet. You must listen a little longer. Indeed, the mental history of this incongruity, who ventures to call himself your friend, is incomplete, unless I may deposit in your faithful ears my final, my most startling episode. I broke off from its recital a page or two back. Now it trembles on my pen-tip and must come.

“When I first touched Blankshire soil, on the very day of my arrival, Frugality, a goddess who loveth shoe-leather above the steed or chariot, told me I could walk from Stembury station across and along the ridges of the downs to Redburn. Now Frugality and I have been so long on such intimate terms,

that I generally adopt her whispered suggestions. For she is a good, homely, honest creature, and much safer company, on the whole, than her more flighty and tawdry step-sister, Dame Fortune. So over the downs I trudged. 'Twas a longish walk, and a solitary one. I was beginning to flag and wondering when I should reach this receding and illusive hamlet of Redburn. I was now passing through a dim and dreary table-land on the top of one of the highest downs. No living thing seemed near. No field, no sign of man's toil, or human habitation was in sight. I flushed a snipe in one of the many mountain pools, and its cry, as it rose twisting away, startled me in the utter loneliness. I seemed to be raised up into the chamber of the clouds. The wind was bringing them on so fast and so low, that, as they raked across, I felt almost inclined to stoop to avoid striking my forehead into their advancing drifts. The very hill-top itself seemed to reel in their rapid motion. Above, around, on all sides, was nothing but moving clouds. Ahead

and behind me, I saw naught but the level surface of the down ending abruptly against the sky-line. The day before, I had sat scribbling near Covent Garden, now I was translated into cloud-land. The intense solitude chilled me like the damp of a vault. Had I really lost my way? That could not be, I held safe the little thread of footpath still. This at least showed vestiges of man, and became almost a companion.

“ I saw, at length, something ahead of me, dark against the sky. It rose from the centre of the level waste, mysterious. Not the sphinx head jutting from Memphian sands would have loomed in stranger or more incomprehensible outline. I made it out all at once—a girl sitting on a cairn! At this moment, to my right, rose up an old man, covered with little linen bags, picking snails on the hill-side. Human society at last, but of the weirdest description! It must be some old French refugee, I thought, gathering his frugal dinner apart from village eyes and gossip. The girl ahead was his daughter, doubtless.

Ah! well! What, on nearer approach, would she be like? Davenant Browne, you have laughed, and will laugh again at my susceptibility; but I swear and protest that the fault is not in me, but in the circumstances into which I am thrust. A man cannot be a stock or a stone; we have eyes, we have a heart, we are burnt with fire, we are chilled with frost, we feel the wind upon our faces, we are wet with the rains of God, the elemental powers fulfil their impressions upon us, and our senses are correspondingly affected. And who is angry? Who blames the hand if it be burnt, the cheek if it is cold? and shall beauty, that divinest elemental power, affect us no more than the gale does a granite crag? Or, if it affect us, must men sneer and laugh and shoot out lips, and cast up eyebrows? By Heaven! the man, who saw thee there, my Oread, on the mossed fragments of the dim grey hills; my siren, who hast made thy throne on the unhewn gravestones, whereby dead bones have laid; the man—nay, the stock—who saw thee there, and did not at

once desperately, irrevocably, irretrievably love thee, is fit for no better doom than to kennel the swine of Circe, or to unloose the sandal latchet of Thersites. I hear thy honest peals of laughter on reading this ; yea, I seem to hear them as far as Covent Garden. ‘Hang the fellow!’ thou criest ; ‘this is rather strong. Here are two desperations, a double irrevocability. Thou canst not die for the love of two maidens at once!’ ‘Why not?’ I rejoin. Think it well over, my Davenant, albeit the retort is to thee unexpected, and perhaps new to thy philosophy. ‘Why not?’ my critic, who teachest other men their way and their faults. I may be wrong, but, like the Cornishmen, I must have the reason why. Mere assertion on thy part is no argument. ‘Why not?’ I pause for thy reply.

“But let me tell thee about the nymph, and thou shalt absolve me or condemn me, some later day. I was driven to speak to her ; I could not help myself. Luckily, the wings of my assurance had not then been torn in

the damaging encounter with the dragon of Tamerton. I asked my way, or some other foolish question, and she told me, frankly enough. She talks to you simply, naturally, right out, as if she were not thinking a bit about herself—a rare and an excellent thing in woman. She has twice the intellect of Edith Atherton, and much more expression in her face. Edith is a turn artificial, rather self-conscious, a flower taught and trained to grow; and yet—Edith is very charming in her way, and, perhaps, the exotic-like development of womanhood is the highest and best. And yet—I vacillate and know not. Still, remember that when I met the Oread on Stonesdale Ridge, I had not renewed as yet my impressions of the lady of the Tamer-ton valley. Then I seemed to sit alone with my Oread upon her mountain between heath and heaven, we two beneath the racing clouds among the wine-dark summits of the hills. Was it a dream? I seemed to have passed into a stranger land than sleep; and you and Covent Garden had happened a hundred years

ago. The world had been recast in a moment of time. My fate seemed written in her face. I sat at her feet to receive from her lips divine the oracles of my life. A stranger? Not she! We had known each other millions of years before. Our souls had wrestled and striven towards each other through eons and eons, through the haze and slime of a world of ichthyosauri and pterodactyls—when the green hills were new, and before half the stars were made. She told me the strangest story in her quiet, phantom-like, simple way, without emphasis, without wonder; and yet our meeting was so strange, and she herself so wholly unlike any mortal maiden I had ever seen before, that it was right and in consonance that she should tell me things incredible, stupendous, dimly and tragically inwoven somehow with myself and my coming. And this in sober truth, without a tinge, or colour of exaggeration, was what she said:—She was sitting upon a heap of stones raised to mark the spot where a dead man had been found a month or two ago. She, sole and unaided,

had found that dead man. No mortal lip had owned him as kith or kin. He had been buried, without a name, in the village graveyard. Not a trace, not a clue was discovered whence he had come, whither he was bound. Since the day on which she had found him, now some time since, she had never visited that spot. Now she did so for the first time; she sat on the dead man's cairn, and her mind went back to his unknown face—when out of cloud, out of the waste, there steps up to her a man in feature the double of the dead, terribly and absorbingly like him! She told me how like him I was, told it most reluctantly, forced, constrained, as it were, to say it; I saw her tremble like an aspen leaf as she made the confession.

“There's for thee, my prosaic and pragmatical critic! Thou weekly apostle of common sense, let me tender thee this nut to crack and meditate upon in thy wisdom. ‘Pshaw!’ you comment, ‘the nervous fancy of an hysterical girl!’ Pardon me, the young lady is neither nervous nor hysterical. Had

she been so, she would hardly have remained alone where she had found this poor fellow before. I tell you our family is unlike any other family. The old Greek idea of a family curse, I for one most strenuously believe in. You will explain this, like the enlightened materialist you are, by saying, that by a curse the poor blunderheaded ancient only prefigured that inbred and often inherited violence of temperament, which always in the end landed its possessors in tragedies and disasters. As you please, my good philosopher; I accept, *quantum valeat*, your solution; it just scratches the surface of a mystery, organic, fathomless as that of free will, and leaves us all the darker for the spark of light just elicited. But to me it sounds far more forcible, and it is certainly terser than your formalistic rigmarole, to speak of a family curse. And I shall not alter my phraseology to suit the most dapper young sceptic who ever worshipped a triangle.

“Well, to close this tedious news-sheet at last, and not to leave you wholly in the mist

as to the earthly attributes of this second goddess, whom I met so strangely, and have, after my romantic vein, so wildly idealized, I may mention, she turns out to be one Miss Salvia Richmond (the fore name is pretty, but to *her*, I maintain, inappropriate), and she is the daughter of the vicar of Redburn. *Vale!* I end abruptly. As you love me, write! I talk to many here, but I think to none but you.

“Yours ever,

“RICHARD LEYLAND.

“P.S.—You had better send me some work down, as my funds are running short. I have no expenses here, it is true, or next to none. But when I return, how shall I ever fee all these retainers?”

CHAPTER III.


A GOODS TRAIN.

It all came about, as old Sarah Bland herself would say, "a this'uns;" and into a dismal predicament enough the greed and selfishness of Sarah Bland the younger succeeded in landing me. In comes the vicar this morning to our breakfast-table with a very blank face.

"Well, Mr. Vicar," I commence, jocosely, little guessing what was in store for me, "have any of your pets escaped to the hills during the night? What inmate of your menagerie, as Farmer Digweed calls it, has broken loose? Surely this solemn aspect betokens some unusual calamity in snaildom! Has our only servant put her besom through the collection? Matters more mundane


could not lengthen your reverence's face to its present dimensions. No! Something is plainly very wrong among the land-shells!"

Dear old father! accepting all this impertinence with the utmost good humour, he began to confess that what ruffled his equanimity most was an exhibition of supreme selfishness. What was the use of sermons? What profit in the priesthood? Here was Sarah Bland the younger; she had sat under him twice a Sunday for twenty years, and had never done aught glaringly bad. Yet water ran off a duck's back not less impermeably than the effect of his two decades of admonition had flowed away from the sermon-proof conscience of Sarah Bland. She had remained a comfortable and consistent heathen. The vicar used hard names with reluctance; but he rated Sarah's moral qualities about on the level of a chimpanzee's. Certainly, in natural affection the ape was Sarah's superior. So spake my father, with a vehemence and emphasis most unlike his equable self.



Perfectly serious now, I inquired, with some anxiety for further details.

With a flushed face the vicar explained, "It had been arranged between Dr. Ricketts and myself, that Sarah Bland should this very morning see her mother and namesake, a surgical case, to the Leatherbarrow Infirmary by the nine o'clock train from Stembury. The old dame is much too unwell to travel alone, and, at my own expense, I had engaged the Merlin fly to take them comfortably to the railway. Farmer Digweed, a good fellow in spite of his drink and conceit, was ready with an offer of his spring cart. But it was very undesirable that this case should be jolted. Very well; ten minutes since arrives the daughter, with the cool announcement that, having got an eighteenpenny job of charing in the village to-day, she was too poor, as she expressed it, to turn away money. *Ergo*, her mother, in her present critical state, must depart for the infirmary as best she can alone. I then told this dutiful daughter my mind with the utmost freedom and emphasis,



whereupon she departed in high dudgeon, saying that she was a respectable woman and as regular a churchgoer as any in the village. And so, alas! she is. And this is a melancholy reflection enough for the vicar. Really, the apathetic and mercenary way in which many of the poor regard the deaths and illnesses of their nearest kin is, my dear Salvia, most disheartening. Now comes the question, what is to be done? The Merlin fly will be at old Sarah's cottage in twenty minutes. I have a vestry meeting, or I would see her to the infirmary myself."

I took what I called a practical view of the situation, and proposed to make up to Sarah the younger the one and sixpence, which she would forfeit by going, out of my own not over-abundant pocket-money. The vicar was bearing the expense of the carriage, therefore I would not allow him to pay one penny more.

My father at this proposal shook his head obdurately and went on, "To that I will never assent. I utterly refuse to countenance,

directly or indirectly, the inhuman and revolting avarice of this daughter. Am I to pay and reward her for acting in a manner in which a beast of the field would hardly behave to its offspring? Don't let me hear a word more, Salvia. On this point I am adamant!"

I heard the vicar out; and, indeed, I loved him all the more for this generous indignation, so unusual in the old recluse; then, when he had concluded, I said, in a quiet, matter-of-fact voice, that I would accompany the old dame myself to the infirmary, and that I should hurry upstairs at once and fetch down my shawl and bonnet.


Till I now propounded it, the idea of my taking a journey by rail alone had never entered my father's brain. The proposal seemed to make him realize all at once the silent lapse of years in our quiet vicarage. Here was the child, whom the other day, as it seemed, he remembered in frocks and pinafores, grown up unawares into a woman; who, when a good cause for so doing came,

could now act, and come, and go on her own responsibility. By entering upon this journey alone, I seemed to complete my enfranchisement from childish things; to become a living will and partner in our little household, having been heretofore an assistant and secondary influence. The journey would seem a brief one enough to folks who rush about Europe in these days of steam; but my father and I moved the whole year through, so seldom, that this proposition of mine to proceed alone to Leatherbarrow sounded in the vicar's ears much as if I had abruptly announced an expedition to the Great Pyramid.

I read, or fancied that I read, all this in my father's face, as he called me a good girl, just as he used to do years back, and kissed me and said that I should go. And then we both of us cried just a little. I suppose that it was very sentimental and foolish, and that it is hardly worth setting down here. But people who live in great cities, amid one continual whirl of change and excitement, can have no idea of the deep shock—I have

no better word—which the least disarrangement or re-adjustment in the domestic relations of two quiet country folks causes, who live together from year's end to year's end and love each other.


So, much to the astonishment of the elder Sarah Bland, I presented myself ready equipped as guide in her Merlin fly. Her estimable daughter had already deserted to her roving commission of cleaning up, with a noble indifference as to whether her parent got under way or remained hopelessly ashore. She might at least have stayed to lend a hand of help in hoisting her lymphatic and unwieldy relative up the carriage steps—a task to which the united efforts of the driver and myself were barely equal. Stembury station reached, our difficulties lessened, for the porters were civil and helpful. They got us a second-class compartment to ourselves, and shot Mrs. Bland into it quite dexterously; and, pitying her condition, abstracted a foot-warmer from a first-class carriage for her especial benefit, much to the indignation of a



very young gentleman with a very long cigar, who felt his self-importance keenly wounded by this abstraction, and threatened to bring the matter before what he called the Board of Directors. My charge had never been on the railway before, but her bodily ills diverted her mind from the novelty of this experience.

So off we steamed towards Leatherbarrow. I never expected to find an agreeable travelling companion in Mrs. Bland ; but I do not think she need have been quite so fractious or quite so unthankful. She treated me the whole way on the footing, that, somehow or other, I was making a good thing of it by seeing her into Leatherbarrow ; that she was conferring an actual obligation by submitting herself to my escort. A profound disbelief in disinterestedness of any kind seemed to be the one point in the scheme of things on which Mrs. Bland's views were definite and final. As parent to Sarah Bland the younger, I felt that in her case such firmly rooted convictions were excusable.

Poor old thing! her own woes and abuse of her daughter constituted her only topic of conversation. I own I felt glad when I reached the red-crowded roofs, the steeples, and long chimneys of Leatherbarrow. At the station here, while limping from train to cab on my arm, Mrs. Bland first saw the engine (luckily unattached when they packed her in at Stembury) just letting off its steam. This sight filled her with such extreme dismay, that she vowed she would have never entered the train "if she had known that creature was to have the 'droring' of her," and I quite believe she would have kept her word. The infirmary proved only a short drive; and here I found her advent had been duly notified, and all was ready for her reception. She was at once taken from my hands and put to bed. I waited until the doctor had seen her; and ascertained that, though her case was hopeless, the journey had done her no harm, thanks, he added, gallantly, he was convinced, to my care. Could he see me back to the station? I declined, in some



confusion, and walked back rather hurriedly by myself; for, as there was now no sick person in the case, I did not see why I should indulge myself, young and active, in expensive luxuries.

I reached the Leatherbarrow station just in time to step into a train, which would take me back with few stoppages to Stembury. I had trusted my means of return to chance, and I felt myself fortunate in being able to return without delay. I had anticipated a dreary enough half-hour, or even more, in a waiting-room, and here we were puffing back merrily already. "I have managed it all charmingly," thought I to myself; "nothing could have gone off better than this my first unprotected excursion. I shall certainly repeat this experiment on my own account, and see a little more of the world. To-day's experience shows how thoroughly independent I can be; how completely able to take care of myself. I shall be back in our cozy little parlour long before that old snail of a vicar expects me. 'The mind becomes like that it

contemplates,'” said I, self-complacently, attempting a quotation. “Do not expect me, Mr. Parent, to go up and down one slimy track on the same little garden-wall all the best of my time, when I can scour across fields and plunge through mountains at the modest computation of thirty miles an hour. How splendidly we are gliding along, with the ease of some great bird’s flight! with what perfect smoothness and safety——!”

A loud crash and a strange sickening vibration cut short my soliloquy; I felt myself dashed first against the opposite side of the carriage, thence on to my face across the floor. I lay there stunned for a few seconds, and then got up; beyond a bruise upon my knee and a blow upon my eyebrow, neither of which seemed serious, I felt myself to be perfectly unhurt. I do not think that I was much frightened, though I guessed at once, of course, what had occurred. My first impression of returning consciousness was, I believe, one of thankfulness that I had no longer old Sarah Bland on my hands. What

struck me next was the very curious way in which the floor of my compartment was tilted up all on one side, so that to reach the door one had to walk, or more literally to scramble, on all fours *uphill*. Of course, I found this door locked when I managed to reach it. But, holding myself up by the window-sash, I managed to hang on by this, and, in plain English, by my chin, and so to get a side-view along the train forwards.

I shall never forget the sight which then presented itself. We had run into a goods train, which was in the act of shunting; and had struck into its central trucks as it were amidships, smashing their woodwork into literal splinters, twisting their great, strong ironwork into rings and curves as easily as a wire is twisted round a nosegay. The huge blocks of Bath stone, which the goods train carried, had been tossed as easily as pebbles over a hedge into a cottage garden; and there they lay at intervals among the cabbages. As to our poor engine, it was turned on its side, quite like a maimed, living creature,

panting out volumes of steam and flame. The funnel had been knocked clean off, and two of its wheels were in the air. The driver and fireman, who I found had jumped off in time, were standing over their disabled engine, watching it, but afraid, so I thought, to go very near. Somehow, they reminded me of two people in the hunting-field watching a poor horse who has broken its back over some fence. At critical moments the mind is disposed both to suggest and to dwell upon quaint similitudes. And now, having told briefly, and in a manner wholly inadequate, what I saw, how shall I ever find words to describe what I heard? I should not until then have believed it possible that women could have invented so many different ways of screaming, that the very limited compass of the ordinary female voice could have presented such infinite varieties of pitch, tone, and dissonance.

But this is not a pleasant subject, so I will pass on. As for the men, their oaths and interjections were noisy enough, but among

these, I noticed a strange contrasting monotony. I will not dilate further upon the details of this horrid casualty ; but let me at once relieve the reader's mind by assuring him, that though the carriages were unroofed, vans wrecked, fifty yards of roadway torn up, and trucks smashed to tinder, no one person, almost a miracle in itself, was actually killed, and only three too much injured to continue their journey. I did not ascertain all this till long after, for at first the confusion was, of course, very great. I had the sense, however, to remain where I was, and not to get out through the window, as a silly woman did, who only gained a sprained ankle by the feat, and increased the list of disabled ones in so doing.

Presently, things began to calm down a little. The guard had been rapidly along the train, and ascertained that things were better, as regarded personal injuries, than he expected. -So, after a time they began to unlock the carriage doors, and to take the people out of the train.

Now that the reader's anxiety for the

human portion of our freight has somewhat subsided, I may pass with a clear conscience to notice the welfare of some creatures lower in the scale, for whom I felt most unfeignedly sorry. On the other side of my carriage to the compartment of the lady with the hurt ankle, was a dog-box. Into this, just as we steamed out of Leatherbarrow, I had seen a gamekeeper push in two pointers hurriedly. After our collision the piteous howls of these poor animals had added their quota to the Babel of horror and discord which arose after the first grand smash. In due time, the gamekeeper re-appeared, wading instep-deep in the loose sand of the cutting where the accident had occurred; with him came a guard with a railway key, and following them a gentleman, with whose gait I seemed somehow familiar. But he halted some hundred yards from my carriage, and the two others approached alone. The dogs, in their captivity, at the sound of a well-known voice, exchanged their dolorous notes for a joyful and eager chorus of recognition; hearing

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which, the keeper told the guard, with a laugh, that "they could bide where they were for the present, as they were all right, or they would never be so noisy."

In this view the guard seemed to concur, for he pocketed his key, and began to tie up a slightly injured finger, while the keeper proceeded to dust away the sand from the sides of his gaiters.

Upon this I lifted up my voice, for I really could not help it, and said, "Oh, do let those poor dogs out! they must be much more frightened than we are, for they are all in the dark, and they cannot understand, except by being released, what has happened."

As I spoke in the air some six feet above the keeper's head, he had to look upwards to discover what manner of woman was interceding for his pointers. When he did so, I was surprised to see him touch his hat; but, on regarding the man more attentively, I recognized in him David Rattenworth, one of the under-keepers at the Priory.

"Beant you our parson's young lady?"

demanded Mr. Rattenworth, with an upturned glance of mingled amusement and commiseration.

I owned to my description ; and, while I did so, pictured to myself the probable expression of "our parson's" features, could he have at the moment beheld "his young lady," painfully balancing herself by hands and chin on the window ledge of a railway carriage, tilted aloft into blue air ; could he have seen the splintered train, the huge, gasping engine, the panic-stricken females, the confusion, the havoc, and the complication, of which his stay-at-home daughter formed one inconspicuous item.

The keeper next inquired, with heavy good nature, if I was hurt. I assured him that, beyond a slight bruise or two, I was perfectly uninjured.

Mr. Rattenworth was exasperatingly cool. He seemed hardly to realize the situation.

"We come from the Priory this morning, we did," he explained, removing his hat to scratch his head meditatively with his dog-

whip. "We've been doing an outlying manor of Sir Sidney's. Sir Sidney, he couldn't come along of business and company; and Mr. Moorcock, our head-keeper, *he* couldn't come along of gout and lumbager; and well it is Mr. Moorcock didn't come, as this 'ere collusion and pitch in must ha' driven his gout inwards. But Muster Richards—the nevvvy—he come, and the dawgs, they come. I'll let Muster Richards know, as how you are situated, miss."

"I must beg that you will do no such thing," I insisted, in consternation, growing very red indeed; and, having let go both with hands and chin, I retired by sliding down into the depressed portion of the railway carriage, and so was lost to view.

Either the gamekeeper did not hear my injunction before I disappeared, or possibly he thought that my emphatic reluctance to be rescued in the manner which he suggested, proceeded from the collision having acted upon my wits in a contrary way to which it might have acted upon poor old Moorcock's gout. Be

this as it may, away strode Mr. Rattenworth ; and presently I heard another voice, which made me feel very nervous, say outside the carriage—"Are you positive, David, that this is the compartment?" To which David responded that she was next the dogs right enough, and by that he knowed her. Then followed the grating of a key in my door and the apparition of Richard Leyland, making a bow in a position of much gymnastic difficulty.

"Let me take you out, Miss Richmond," he said, naturally enough. How much more at ease a man always seems, when he has got something really to do, some obstacle to encounter, some help to tender!

I answered, laughingly, that this was more readily said than done. First, I must clamber up. Would he go down again, and wait beneath while I did so?

"Just what I was going to propose, Miss Richmond." So down he went.

Behold Salvia next balancing herself on the giddy ledge of the now open carriage door, two fathoms over her rescuer's hat.

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“Now, am I to slide or am I to jump, Mr. Leyland? That sand-heap seems a capital lighting-place.”

He suggested that I should commence with a slide, continue with a leap, and conclude by his catching me to break my fall.

“Very well,” said I, coolly; “so let it be. But I warn you, Mr. Leyland, I am heavier than you think.”

Thanks to my mountaineering experiences, I accomplished the descent very creditably, and I saw that Mr. Leyland thought so too. I told him that I was all right now, and that they must go and help the other people. I would sit upon yonder sand-bank and would take care of the dogs and they of me, until he and the keeper were at liberty. Mr. Leyland, seeing that I should like him to go, went, observing that it was a real comfort to find a woman, who in such circumstances did not scream, could keep her head, and, strangest of all, found time to think of other people.

So I remained on the adjacent sand-hill, while I beheld Mr. Leyland, with his acolyte

in fustian, rendering vigorous assistance down the whole length of the bruised worm, which our train now resembled. Flora and Don, whose chain I held, nestled their muzzles contentedly upon my knees and began to drowse. Poor things! their nerves were evidently much shaken, and they needed repose. So passed an hour, and then Richard Leyland returned.

“I have obeyed orders, Miss Richmond, and done, I think, all that I can for the present.” I showed by my eyes that I was pleased. “So now,” he continued, “I appropriate this opposite sand-hill, and take off my hat, for I confess to feeling considerably heated. Some of these good dames are, let me tell you, not so easy to exhume from coaches in ruins as young ladies of eighteen.”

“Are they so heavy, Mr. Leyland?”

“Gelatinous elephants,” he whispered. “Well, now for a council of war, since our prospects are plainly desperate. But, first, you will promise, will you not, that our fortunes are united, until we do get back—somehow?”

I told him how thankful I felt to have any one to help me in my present desolate plight.

"Then our compact is made," he pursued, heartily, "sealed, signed, and delivered, on these sand-hills, at nowhere particular. Witnesses, Don and Flora, pointers, to the above. And now I intend to inaugurate our partnership by a confidence; for mutual confidence is the sheet anchor of united enterprise. Well, don't be downhearted, Miss Richmond, but I see no chance of movement, at least by steam-power, for hours, and even then, I fear, the direction will be retrograde."

"You mean," I hazarded, nervously, "that when a new engine does come, it will only proceed to draw us back into Leatherbarrow."

"I congratulate my junior partner on her most lucid apprehension of our difficulty."

"What a dismal look-out for me!" I exclaimed, with a flushing face. "I know no one in Leatherbarrow, except one old pauper in a hospital. But why cannot this provoking train go on?"

"There," smiled my companion, "our junior

partner is becoming less business-like. In short, we have not got any rails to go forward upon. The permanent roadway is cut to ribbons for forty yards ahead."

"I had forgotten all about the rails," I confessed, playing idly with the sand. "How very silly and young lady-like!"

"Not at all," exclaimed Mr. Leyland, politely. "Now hear my proposition."

"No!" I cried, dashing in hurriedly, "you shall first hear mine. Do not mind me, Mr. Leyland, but get on alone as best you can. That very—ahem—large lady with the bruised bonnet-box and broken parasol is far too ugly not to be respectable. I shall throw myself on her protection, and do extremely well. Good-bye, Mr. Leyland, and many, many thanks."

My senior partner refused to take my hand, and shook his head resolutely. "I won't hear of it," he insisted; "I shall not resign my charge of you to that very voluminous person with the one curl on her forehead. I object to that particular curl; and I protest

in the name of all good faith and commercial integrity. What! Miss Richmond, can you look me in the face? No sooner enter a partnership than wish to back out of it! Look at my two canine witnesses to our agreement, and feel abashed!"

"Oh dear! oh dear, Mr. Leyland! I hardly know whether to laugh or to cry. I shall be such a trouble to—everybody."

"On behalf of one of the everybodies—and perhaps the one most concerned—I beg to record an emphatic *no!*"

"You are so kind."

"Fiddlestick! Miss Richmond; I have an idea. Could you by any manner of means manage a seven miles' walk?"

I told him that I felt confident I could perform that distance.

"Then the knot is solved," exclaimed my companion, rubbing his hands. "That would land us at Collingridge, a city of milk and honey, and, what we want more, hackney coaches. Thence, in one of these for five more miles to Redburn."

"Then let us start at once," I concurred, rapturously.

"Our late friend, the goods train," explained Mr. Richard, assisting me to rise, "has had the bad taste to knock himself and us to pieces in an utter wilderness of sand, which lies north of Collingridge. Therefore, until we have traversed this desert, I hope for neither human succour nor equine assistance."

I professed myself quite ready, and said that I should enjoy the walk of all things.

"Then here we go," he said, cheerily; "our expedition is about to start. David, we are going forward on foot. Don, Flora, shake yourselves and advance. The object of the present exploration is to rediscover the site of the lost city of Redburn."

"Don't be ridiculous, Mr. Leyland! Our friend with the bonnet-box is listening and opening her eyes very wide. Don't!"

"The ill-fated party," he pursued, rather raising his voice, "consists of a vicar's daughter and a gamekeeper, two liver-coloured

pointers, and a young man of literary pursuits. Society will not greatly feel the loss of the last three."

"I wish you would be quiet, Mr. Leyland."

"The army of Cambyses," he began, with the utmost solemnity and quite out loud, "then set on towards the wilderness with the utmost resolution and alacrity. Poor fellows! they were never heard of again!" He continued in the deep bass of a transpontine tragedian, and bowed gravely to her of the curl and of the parasol with the broken back, when he had concluded.

And so our march began. A quaint band enough we must have seemed, as one by one we filed past the belated groups of staring passengers. All had by this time abandoned their carriages in the wrecked train. The men were sauntering aimlessly up and down in twos and threes. The women sat dotted about the sand-hills, not unlike grey rabbits. A few munched sandwiches and produced pocket-flasks. One group, consisting of what is called a "heavy" family of children, eyed

these banqueters with looks of imploring hunger.

Our friend, the guard, saw us across the rubbish and *débris*, and wished us a good journey; and further said, he would give half-a-crown to be coming with us as well, as he was having a bad time of it among the impatient passengers. Mr. Leyland being thus reminded of half-a-crown, gave him one, which Mr. Guard seemed to expect.

On we trudged. A five minutes' walk, and intervening sand-hills presently masked the whole scene of ruin and broken wheels from our view.

"I breathe more freely now," said Mr. Leyland, fanning himself with his hat; "I am glad I have taken you out of all that havoc."

I felt also greatly relieved, and I told him so, gratefully.

"You keep a diary, perhaps?" he observed, rather abruptly, after half a mile of silence.

"Well, I own to a sort of book in which I jot some things down."

"For example," he went on, with a side glance, "your chronicle of this afternoon—I should like some day to peruse it."

"That you never shall," I returned, resolutely.

"Take care," he exclaimed, with a half-serious insistence. "'Some day' is a long time to answer for. Stranger things have come to pass than that I, in misty ages long remote, should get a peep at the contents of this secret narrative."

"If I die, Mr. Leyland, and it is sold for waste paper, you may."

"If you put into my mouth," he retorted, with an impatient gesture, "such horrid meanings, I shall change the subject. What shall we talk about?"

"Sand," said I, kicking it up before me. "Nothing but sand. Have you no observation to make about sand suited to my limited intelligence?"

"I will try," he answered, maliciously. "Sand spoils silk dresses, I believe."

"Who told you that?" I inquired, with a steady glance.

“Why, Miss Richmond?”

“Who confided to you this most lady-like experience?”

He seemed to colour a little, as he rejoined with an airy readiness which was hardly natural, “That I learnt miles away among classic sands most unlike these. There, silk gowns suffer from pulverized emperors, dusty gladiators, and crumbling early Christians. In fact, one windy night in the Coliseum this was confided to me.”

“A precious confidence!” I echoed, in a sarcastic voice, for I felt somehow rather nettled. “What a pity, that the young lady thought so much of her finery and so little of the grand associations of the spot!”

“I mentioned no young lady,” he interposed, evidently amused by my sudden attack.

“Why should you?” I retorted, reddening; “but she was there for all that.”

“There was a young lady—certainly,” allowed my companion, with a grain of reluctance. “But about these silk dresses——”

“Don’t ask me,” I cried, snapping him up.

"How can I tell? I have no such thing in my wardrobe."

He muttered something, which sounded very like, "looking none the worse for that." But I am really not sure, whether I caught the words exactly.

Another interval of silence. So far our topics had not proved fortunate.

"What are you thinking of, Miss Richmond?" he began at last.

"About a picture of a sick camel, Mr. Leyland, in the first book which I learnt to read from. It lies on the ground, watching the departing caravan."


"Pleasant, truly, and appropriate," he laughed, raising his eyebrows. "Well, let me match it by another image as dismal as your own. Suppose and suppose, as they say, that this ill-fated company of ours does perish among these illimitable tracts of green sand (which is dark yellow); what do you predict that the antiquaries of a future age will make of us? Five sets of white bones and two dog-collars, respectively inscribed

‘Don’ and ‘Flora.’ There, I have outdone you triumphantly in dismalness.”

“Please don’t joke on such subjects,” I answered, with a quiver of the lip. “You know, I made a dreadful discovery once, and the mere notion of being found myself, in the way I found him, makes me tremble and beat all over.”

“My usual luck,” he observed, penitently; “this makes the third unfortunate topic which I have deliberately chosen to bore you with. By the way, I was like the poor fellow; so I was.”

As he said this half to himself, with a slight meditative contraction of the eyebrows, that weird sense of likeness flashed out of his face once more upon me. There it was, and I could not reason myself out of seeing it. The face before me was fresh, comely, full of health and animation; that other shadowy countenance was wan, pinched, homely, full of the last sad change; and yet—or were my senses misleading me?—the two seemed so like, so like!



I suppose that I must have looked scared and pained and puzzled, for Mr. Richard continued to press me, not, I thought, very generously, upon the same point.

"Confession is unnecessary," he continued, watching the play of my features. "So you do think me like him still? After many kind but fruitless efforts to convict yourself of hallucination, the fact remains insoluble and victorious."

"Let us change the subject," was my sole rejoinder, and I proceeded to quicken my pace.

"Certainly," said my companion, with the utmost good humour, "that makes awkward topic number four; we are getting on."

"You are very provoking," I returned, in a low voice; a little more, ever so little, would have made me cry.

"Courage!" he continued, in a bantering voice; "we shall strike the right vein in time. Are you a fatalist, Miss Richmond? I own that to some extent I am one. How strange it is, that you and I should have met twice in

these few days under circumstances so abnormal. Fate moves us, I suspect, exactly as it pleases. We are wholly passive. Not," he added, with a slight hesitancy, "that I feel at all disposed to reproach my destiny for the last direction in which she has drifted me."

I pretended not to understand this, and observed that destiny was at present directing our steps through a region both gritty and monotonous.

"If I wore at the present moment the wishing cap of the nursery story," resumed Mr. Leyland, with a change of manner, "I should like to issue orders for the prompt supply of some three articles from the enchanted store-house of 'ask and receive.'"

"You are too moderate," I rejoined, briskly; "I should ask for dozens and millions of things."

"Is not the arithmetical progression of our junior partner somewhat spasmodic?" he observed, with a half look in my direction.

"The locomotive progression of the junior

partner is becoming intermittent also," I confessed, laughingly.

"I am praying to the fairy of the wishing cap for a favour," he went on, "which I am convinced none of her devotees ever asked her for before. Can you guess it?"

"Animal, vegetable, or mineral?" I demanded, trying to put a good face upon my increasing fatigue.

"All three," returned my companion, in a voice of mystery. "You had better give it up. Half of it is 'raw,' often in a sense not intended by the game, and half of it is 'manufactured.' Answer—a disengaged one-horse fly."

"I am not so very tired after all," I endeavoured to protest; but I was evidently beginning to limp just a little on one foot.

"Think," he continued, in a piteous tone, "of the dozens of empty cabs, which must at this moment be crawling along Piccadilly, and getting into the way of every one and everything. It's a reflection quite to sadden one."

"Then you don't invoke the sight of Lady Leyland's carriage and pair, Mr. Leyland?"

"Heaven forbid!" he exclaimed with a wry face; "there is such an extent of glazing in that family coach, that I feel carried along in a moving conservatory."

"It does appear rather hot and close," I admitted, looking as solemn as I could.

"The glass and atmosphere combined would, I feel sure, raise early cucumbers," he observed, in a level, measured voice.

"If you persist in making me laugh, Mr. Leyland," I interposed, piteously, "one of the present caravan of pilgrims will never reach Mecca—that is to say, Collingridge—alive."

"Very well, Miss Richmond, I can stand this no longer, and I mean to be despotic," said he, appropriating my parasol and coming closer. "An arm you must have. No, I will not hear a word! As long as I saw the faintest chance of our junior partner proceeding unassisted, I forbore to exasperate that limping member of the firm with any such suggestion. Now, since necessity has

no laws, the junior partner must be reasonable."

I was reasonable, as he called it; but with sore reluctance. "It is all these dreadful new boots," I murmured, flushing from chin to forehead. "I could have done the distance twice over in my dear old pair."

"Of course you could," he agreed, to pacify me. "Advanced guard, by which I mean," in a louder tone, "David, is anything visible ahead?"

The gamekeeper reported that he saw mostly sand and turnpike road.

"Encouraging, Miss Richmond!"

"Are we likely, do you think, Mr. David, to come in sight of anything soon?"

"Oh, Miss Richmond, what a dismal query!" cried Mr. Leyland.

David could not say; not that he know'd of; not afore the Flowing Spring; we should be in sight of that afore long, he reckoned.

"How nice that does sound!" I broke in, rapturously; "a most appropriate oasis. One can fancy the pure crystal welling out of the dark, thirsty earth."

David here murmured, "beer-house."

"Oh, dear me! is that all?" I demanded, crestfallen.

"I fear so, Miss Richmond. Does this public boast of any sort of trap, David?"

"I have heard," replied the gamekeeper, rubbing his forehead to stimulate his recollection, "that the landlord did used to hawk about coals and slabs of salt in a little donkey-cart. Whether that animal is still alive——"

"My good David," interrupted Mr. Leyland, "let not that question perplex you. I admit that this expedition is brought certainly low; but to such straits—eh, Miss Richmond? we are not at present come. Well, David," for David had his finger on his hat-brim, and evidently laboured under some suppressed announcement, "what is the matter now?"

Quoth the gamekeeper, indicating Flora with his whip-handle, "That there dawg is agoing lame."

"Well, David, well," returned Mr. Ley-

land, with an air of squirearchical fussiness, assumed evidently for my especial amusement; "Nothing in that, David, nothing at all! I am slightly lame myself; Miss Richmond is decidedly lame. In short, the expedition generally has begun to limp. Why should Flora be better off than her neighbours? Hang Flora!"

David grinned from ear to ear; and our whole situation was becoming so ludicrously deplorable, that there was nothing for it but to laugh too. This cheered us up for another half-mile, during which Mr. Richard said—

"I shall be very sorry when we do get home, if we ever do so."

"O you wicked story!" I ejaculated, adopting a village phrase.

"I suppose," he continued, speaking very low, "that when we do reach your native village, and my avuncular domicile, we shall endeavour to obliterate this escapade in true British fashion by never seeing each other again?"

"We are sure to meet," I stammered, becoming rather flushed.


"Yes, Miss Richmond, as the most conventional of acquaintances. Now promise me," he pursued, earnestly, "that you will never treat me again on that footing."

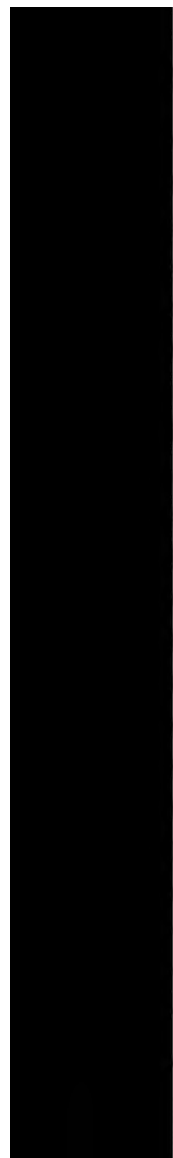
"How can I promise?" hesitated I, continuing to feel hotter than ever. "I can never cease—indeed, I shall always feel most grateful——"

"Now don't be tiresome!" broke in my companion, petulantly; "or I will run away and leave you in the wilderness. As if I wanted you to thank me! Upon my honour, this is much too bad!"

"Then I must think my thanks, Mr. Leyland."

"All I know," said he, speaking very fast, "is, that it is the greatest of great pleasures to get a chance of seeing you so naturally, and without seeming to have intruded myself. And if you were not, as I know you are, tiring yourself to death, I could be quite philosophic, if Collingridge were twice the distance."





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To adopt Mrs. Hammersley's pet phrase, you might have knocked me down with a feather while Mr. Richard was expressing himself to this effect. I could only reiterate my former flurried commonplace about my gratitude and his good nature.

"I wonder whether we shall ever have another walk together, Miss Richmond?"

I evaded this question by saying that I should be very busy in the parish for some time to come.

"In what way?" he inquired, evidently disparaging my excuse.

"Oh, broth and flannel, measles and penny clubs," said I, telling these items off upon my fingers, in a staccato monotone.

"Then, unless I catch the measles, I have little chance of seeing you?" returned Mr. Leyland, with an air of irritation.

"The vicar would take your case," was my rather malicious suggestion.

"It seems to me," insinuated my companion, still unconvinced, "that you do all the parish work. That is hardly fair of the incumbent.

If you take the clothing and dosing, and—ahem—broth-boiling of the rural population, pray, what remains for the vicar ? ”

“ I will tell you ; but you will promise not to laugh ? ”

“ Behold me as grave as a judge, or dooms-day.”

“ There remains for the vicar——” I repeated slowly.

“ Well ! why do you pause ? Something terrible is coming, eh ? ”

“ Snails there remain ; centipedes there remain ; horrors there remain ; slugs, horse-mussels, newts, crickets, stag-beetles, and blind-worms ; all labelled in a neat hand, and considered perfectly lovely.”

“ You have certainly taken away my breath, Miss Richmond.”

“ I meant to suspend your respiration.”

“ Will you come to Stonesdale Ridge some day ? ” Mr. Richard jerked out this request quite abruptly, as if he had kept it by him in stock a long time, but had not found any opportunity for its production.

"I don't know."

"Well, I shall ascend on the chance, and sit on the dead man's cairn, alone with the rooks and the ravens. Some one may have pity on me—in time."

"I hope they may."

"But you doubt it?"

"I say nothing, either one way or the other."

"Things might be worse," concluded Mr. Richard, with a shrug; "at least, you have not refused to come. On that grain of hope must the chickens of anticipation be fed."

And, while I was debating in a considerable flutter, whether to resent this ingenious perversion of my neutral observation, or whether to let the matter rest as it was, a rather, nay, a very serious diversion occurred—the very thought of which makes my face flame as I recount it. It is passed and done with now. Nothing can alter that hideous occurrence. But even my poor pen seems to splutter and quiver, as I write down the circumstances. I dare hardly, at this length of

time, look my note-paper in the face, and I hide my eyes in my hands.

It began in this way. David Rattenworth, our advanced guard, at the conclusion of Mr. Leyland's Persian metaphor, wheeled round, and, raising his thumb above his shoulder, indicated the Flowing Spring. Then we were aware, as the ballads say, of a mean wayside inn, with four windows to the front, the lowermost embellished with two crossed clay pipes, a jar of snuff, and a torn, frowsy, red window-blind. The roughened frontage of the house resembled a gravel walk, which had been raised upright, and next liberally coated with whitewash. Between the two upper windows a rude panel illustration was affixed, representing a beer-barrel flowing out in a parabolic curve of ale into a tumbler. The roof was thatched; and seemed on a small scale, from the variety of its vegetable productions, a hanging garden of Babylon. A crooked doorway, a paved floor lower than the road, and a wooden screen, complete all I remember of the Flowing Spring.

“A muddy source!” commented Mr. Richard, with a sarcastic glance at the sign-board; then turning to David, “That dog gets lamer and lamer; she will have to be carried soon, if this goes on.”

David, thus taken into the conversation, took heart to continue it by craving leave to step aside into the inn, alleging “that he was main dry, and required a wetting. Furthermore, he could ‘ketch’ us up in less than no time.”

I suppose that a young lady ought not even to write down such dreadful slang; but, since written, let it stay; as few are likely to read my diary. Mr. Leyland made no objection, and David disappeared. We were passing on, when my evil genius inspired me with a suggestion. It all came of my unlucky philanthropy—by which I mean my love of brutes, an erroneous but to some extent significant use of the term, so I shall not cancel it. At this juncture, to my own eternal confusion, I must needs propose, that we also should halt before this tavern most

disreputable, procure some warm water, and foment Flora's lame foot. Mr. Leyland hailed this as a most sensible proposition, and went in-doors for the water, while I flung myself down on the long green ale-house bench outside, grateful for this brief interval of repose.

Out came Mr. Richard presently, with a sponge and earthenware basin; the landlord following as assistant; Flora grateful and submitting her hind leg, a picture of patience. Our host was a truculent-looking fellow, with his sleeves tucked up; in none the better humour for having been interrupted during his afternoon doze. Mr. Richard named him in a whisper, "the Rough Diamond," but I feared his roughness was not merely superficial.

The landlord did not improve on acquaintance. He began by observing, "that he should like to see *his* dog go lame," a remark which seemed both menacing and unreasonable. He next told us in accents the reverse of propitiatory, "that those who washed

dogs before his house, out of his crocks, usually took something for the good of his house, and that was fairness, all England through."

Mr. Richard, occupied on one knee over Flora, glanced up sideways at me upon this comically enough, and appeased the Titan by ordering half a pint of beer. "No escape, Miss Richmond," he explained, in an amused whisper, "though I am sure I beg your pardon ; but you see this is a 'rough diamond' of a landlord, and one who is evidently disposed to stand upon his rights. Moreover, between ourselves—though the confession is a dreadful one—I fear that my condition may be equally described in David's 'main dry' ; and altogether, Miss Richmond, you have fallen into very low company."

He said this in a manner so ineffably droll, that I had hardly regained my gravity when the landlord re-appeared with a small pewter pot. Mr. Richard received it, and, without daring to catch my eye, was about to raise the contents to his lips, when the "Rough

Diamond" interposed in a highly characteristic way.

"Where's your manners?" growled the giant, in a husky, captious, and aggressive voice. "Beant you going to give a sup first to yonder wife of yourn? She's had the tramp as well as you, hasn't she? She's took the dust down her throat, hasn't she? You can attend to your dogs, can you? and you can't attend to she?"

I heard it all, every word! Oh, what would I not have given to be deaf? At this dreadfully ill-timed championship of my miserable self, a cold chill came over me, and a mist enveloped my eyes. I wished the earth could there and then open and engulf me. I had just enough sense remaining to foresee, that Mr. Leyland would inevitably lose his temper with our host, if somehow I did not smooth matters. Hurriedly, therefore, I exclaimed—

"Yes, yes; do give me some; I want it very much; I assure you that I do want it."

Mr. Leyland divined instantly that my

woman's wit had hit upon the easiest, indeed the only way out of our embarrassment. A moment's reflection showed him that to resent the "rough diamond's" remarks would place us both in a very false position. So, with some reluctance, he placed the tankard in my hands, and looked our host hard in the face.

If I had been less fluttered at that particular moment, I must have noticed the sound of approaching wheels. But, confused as I then was, I heard little and saw less. With a sort of desperation I took a short sip at the can, and returned it hurriedly to Mr. Richard. At that very instant, I was recalled to consciousness by the whirl of a passing carriage, out of which, behind a blank mist which still enveloped me, proceeded a loudly uttered, "Good gracious!" in a metallic and strangely familiar voice.

I can hardly write it even now; but slowly, slowly this veil of vapour lifted, and I saw things plain. Imagine then, my

horror, my dismay, my shame, my utter and crushing despair, to recognize in the occupants of a very small passing pony-carriage, which they were much too big for, and the basketted sides of which they bulged liberally over, Mr. and Mrs. Hammersley, wide-eyed, keenly curious, and looking inexpressibly shocked; while in the back seat their daughter with her affianced, the curate Meadows, devoured our party with a less horrified but more bewildered gaze. Oh dear! oh dear! There—I have written it twice, and I feel as if my pen could never write anything else but this interjection of lament!

Do imagine the group which met their outraged view! On a bench before a miserable ale-house sat Salvia Richmond, with two sporting characters, and as many dogs of the chase. She raises to her lips a pewter pot in a public thoroughfare. Behind her, in the tavern entrance, stands a gamekeeper wiping his mouth. Before her, on one knee is a young man in a frieze shooting suit, bathing a pointer's leg!

attentions becoming more marked at every visit? Does it not rest with yourself, and yourself only, to become, whenever you choose, Mrs. Ivory?"

"The second Mrs. Ivory," added Edith, with a sarcastic emphasis on the numeral.

"And why not?" pursued the widow, argumentatively. "Surely your implied scruple is that of some romantic schoolgirl of sixteen. Perhaps you are waiting for a sugar-candy prince out of some fairy tale?"

"In plain black and white, mamma," demanded the daughter, with sudden seriousness, "do you really and unreservedly wish me to accept Mr. Ivory—that is, supposing he asks me to marry him?"

"You might do worse, Edith."

"That is not the question," objected her daughter, gloomily. "Who is this Mr. Ivory? and what is this Mr. Ivory, whom you consider so eligible?"

"A man of colossal fortune," returned the mother, almost smacking her lips.

"Is he well connected?" was Miss Ather-ton's next question.

"My dear child," said the widow, in a plaintive voice, "you know, as well as I do, that he is not. It is only in children's stories that a suitor combines all advantages. Dear me! how many well-connected young men we met this season in London, pleasant enough, well dressed, with nice manners! and yet, when one came to go into their prospects—oh, dear me!"

"Quite cases for the workhouse!" said Edith, piteously.

"This is no subject for levity," struck in Mrs. Atherton, frowning. "Now, you are well connected, and that is one of the reasons why Mr. Ivory is paying you attentions. He is too genuine to claim family for himself. He is the architect of his own fortunes."

"I wish," said Edith, spitefully, "that he had been at the same time the architect of his own manners."

"Now this is too severe," protested the mother, playfully tapping her daughter's wrist. "Mr. Ivory always behaves perfectly well."

Before I could move or speak, they had passed in a cloud of dust. So there and then, to the utter amazement of my two male companions, I began to cry.

CHAPTER IV.

LORD CROWBURY'S LIVING.

"IN short," quoth Mrs. Atherton to her daughter, continuing some previous conversation, "I cannot see, my dear, why you should not settle extremely well."

"You have made that observation, mamma, some fifty times before," was Miss Edith's rather tart rejoinder. "I am tired and weary of all these plans for 'settling' me, as you call it. I might be, from the way you talk, a colonial dependency of the British empire. As for all your fine projects, they only end in moonshine and mortification!"

"How dare you look me in the face," retorted the elder lady, "and utter such ungrateful nonsense? Are not our new tenant's

attentions becoming more marked at every visit? Does it not rest with yourself, and yourself only, to become, whenever you choose, Mrs. Ivory?"

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“So does—suppose we say—Sir Sidney Leyland’s butler, and yet his manners are not those of Sir Sidney.”

Mrs. Atherton pronounced her daughter for that day hopeless, and would argue with her on this subject no more. It was an unthankful task to lie awake, as she often did, scheming for the welfare of such a child.

Edith laughingly observed that she must indeed be a desperately difficult young lady to “settle,” if the twelve hours of the daylight proved insufficient to get her launched.

“You are a most unaccountable girl!” insisted her mother, with a sigh. “In our conversation last Wednesday, you seemed inclined to view Mr. Ivory and his pretensions with greater lenience.”

“I admit it, mamma,” said Edith, with an air of languor and dejection. “A day or two back I had half reasoned myself into taking this Mr. Ivory—should he give me the chance. Poverty is a great curse, and I am sure, to see you, mamma, poring day after day over those dreadful little red books, which treat of

ounces of tea and pounds of flesh and tons of coal, is enough to make any girl forswear all ideas of love in a cottage."

"You talk, my dear, with a wisdom beyond your years," was the mother's applausive comment.

"Then I thought to myself," said Edith, with increasing ill humour, "that here we were, you and I, mamma, once more back again from our vaunted London season, which Mrs. Hammersley and all the Blankshire immovables envy us so much for being able to afford. And I took stock how very little this same season had come to, beyond making one discontented with home, and desirous of twenty thousand a year, and opera-boxes, and pony-phaetons, and diamonds like the Duchess of Rochester's——"

"My poor girl!" interposed Mrs. Atherton, consolingly.

"So I reflected," continued the young lady, flinging herself back with a yawn, "that we had done the whole round—breakfast, drum, and ball, for two laborious months, and no

one had come forward ; and that, sooner than go through it all again, I would marry this rich, vulgar fellow, whom chance has thrown at our gates, and who will take me—for my connections ! ”

“ If ever a girl,” commented Mrs. Atherton, wiping her eyes, “ deserved a good establishment, you are that one ! ”

“ To-day,” resumed Edith, in a lower tone, “ a reaction has set in, and I feel angry with myself ; I detest the very idea of this colossal tradesman ; I am romantic, unworldly, and thoroughly out of temper.”

The mother shook her head. The last part of Edith’s self-description, she said, was only too true.

At this the daughter immediately bridled up, and supposed she could have her private worries and vexations ; as well as other people, indeed, who never lost their tempers !

“ My intuitive tact,” exclaimed Mrs. Atherton, coming closer, “ tells me that something has occurred. Now what can it be ? I know of nothing likely to have lowered Mr. Ivory

in your esteem, to have rendered his attentions distasteful, except—— My dear Edith, has this young Leyland been persecuting you again?”

This sudden and not over-tactful query of her mother put the crowning touch to Miss Atherton's ill humour. “You would provoke a saint, mamma,” she exclaimed, with a flushing face. “I would rather be persecuted by some one of my own age than by this mediæval counter-jumper. As for Mr. Leyland, if he had been an early Christian, and you the Emperor Diocletian, you could not have served him worse.”

“I have never ceased to lament my mistake of that day,” whined her mother. “Do not always be bringing this up against me!”

“Now, look here, mamma,” persisted Miss Edith, unpropitiated; “it is not pleasant to be told that I keep people awake all night to get me off. It would be more to the point if you did not drive away young men who like me, and whom I like, by day.”

"I have repeatedly shed tears," sighed Mrs. Atherton, producing once more her lace-fringed handkerchief, "over that most unfortunate incident. It was pure and disastrous fatality. No human foresight could have averted it. Let us not recriminate, my love. Even you, remember, were not sure of his name. Besides, it ought to console you, and it certainly has consoled me, to think that young men of Richard Leyland's position very seldom mean matrimony."

"There again, as usual, you are completely wrong, mamma," insisted her daughter, with increased bitterness, suddenly producing a letter from her pocket. "I have just received this from Lucy Hammersley. I may not have quite the patience of an angel, but I must be allowed some slight right to feel galled and mortified at the intelligence which this letter brings; especially when all this has been done by those, who taunt me with keeping them awake with my matrimonial difficulties. Read it yourself, mamma, for it chokes me." And Miss Atherton, in a mood

by no means seraphic, tossed the missive across to her parent.

The elder lady, with hurrying fingers, opened it, and read aloud to this effect :—

“Stonesdale Vicarage, September, 18—.

“MY DEAR MISS ATHERTON,

“I write this to you as mamma does not really feel sure whether Mrs. Atherton may not be still offended with her. So I leave it to your tact and kindness to communicate to your mother the contents of this letter, or to withhold them, as you judge it wisest and best. My mother is yet uncertain whether her last reception was due to some passing irritation or to some deep-rooted resentment. In the first case, read over this letter to Mrs. Atherton; in the last case, do not. And, to pave the way towards a reconciliation, my mother is quite ready to admit that she acted both rashly and imprudently in directing Mr. Richard Leyland to call upon you, after he had publicly and indecorously commended to my mother, your good looks,

my dear Miss Atherton, in Redburn High Street.

“ We regret to have to confess that though this Mr. Leyland comes of one of our best families, and will have a fine place and immense wealth, he has now shown himself in his true colours. And though Mrs. Hammersley respects the aristocracy and especially the family of the patron of Stonesdale; and though my mother is ready to make every allowance for a little gentlemanly wildness in a young man so highly connected; yet, as the wife of a British clergyman, she never means to permit Mr. Leyland to darken her doors. My mother is sorry to have to announce that this young gentleman, finding, no doubt, by the high moral ground which Mrs. Atherton took in at once ordering him out, that all reputable Blankshire homes were henceforth closed against his visits, has now attached himself to a companion more congenial to those free and easy manners which, mamma regrets to add, our young men of fortune seem, as a class, to prefer.

“All my parent can say for Salvia Richmond is, that never having had a mother’s care to speak of, it must be charitably supposed that this girl really does not know any better. But when it comes to her tramping the country for miles with Mr. Leyland and a gamekeeper ; when it comes to her lolling on the benches of a roadside ale-house, and drinking beer out of a pewter mug, my mother feels that the line of charity and forbearance must be drawn somewhere ; and that every English matron should brand such proceedings with the stigma of reprobation and disgust. Sitting together on the hills, mamma says, is bad enough, but drinking together in public-houses is outrageous. My mamma shudders for her cloth ; for Salvia Richmond is, as you probably know, the Redburn clergyman’s daughter. Her father is an eccentric recluse, quite unequal to keeping her under any kind of restraint. She does as she pleases ; and her father is perfectly satisfied, if he adds one more snail to his herbarium (mamma is not quite sure that is

the right word, and papa is out in the parish). If he would mind his slugs less and his daughter more, my mother thinks it would be as well. Meantime, the whole neighbourhood is greatly scandalized. They say Mr. Leyland is completely infatuated, and that he carries about her camp-stool and umbrella, like a dog. It cannot last long, but, meantime, it is sad to see a young man of good family brought so low. Of course, the girl's head is completely turned by receiving attentions from a quarter so much above her. Mamma is quite at a loss to discover what possible fascination Mr. Leyland can find in a person so uncultivated, one who has never even been finished in a Brighton boarding-school; neither, in my mother's candid and unbiassed opinion, does Salvia Richmond possess more or less good looks than the average Blankshire dairy-maid. While, as regards manners and accomplishments, never having mixed in anything like society, she is a complete Robinson Crusoe, fresh from the hand of Nature; which is, of course, a very unsatisfactory state

for any grown-up girl to be in. And a sad scrambler and climber, mamma regrets to say, into the bargain ; which scrambling and climbing may be a habit attractive to Mr. Leyland ; for, mamma says, Heaven knows what else can have attracted him. But mamma desires me to inform you, that she would rather see any child of hers a dancer at a fair in spangles on the tight-rope (and thankful), than that her daughter should lure young men, even of property and connection, to arm her up hills and down dales, by any such meanders. Mamma felt it was due both to Mrs. Atherton and herself, that these goings on should be at once written to Tamerton. Although, doubtless, Mrs. Atherton is already acquainted with escapades as bad in Mr. Leyland's previous career, or you would not have double-barred and watch-dogged the gate at Tamerton against him, as we have since heard from your coachman's wife you were obliged to do ; and indeed mamma's own eyes witnessed your precautions. Having relieved her mind by this communication,

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my mother wishes to abandon the distasteful topic for ever.

“Mr. Ivory, who we hear is your new tenant at Tamerton Cottage, has subscribed most handsomely to our schools. How fortunate you must be in having secured such a neighbour ! Mamma, who has made his acquaintance, has never met a more affable or gentleman-like man. Our school inspection went off very badly, with complications quite unheard of. Poor papa is always dreadfully bothered on these occasions, and this year he went to bed and left it to mamma and Charles Meadows to conduct the proceedings.

“Charles now joins with mamma and myself in sending our regards to Mrs. Atherton. Believe me, my dear Miss Atherton,

“Yours very truly,

“LUCY HAMMERSLEY.

“P.S.—I re-open this to say that Charles had just read in the *Watchman*, his clerical newspaper, that a living is vacant in the Isle of Man, which is in the gift of your relative, Lord Crowbury. On poor Charles’s behalf

and my own, might I entreat your mother's kind influence and intercession? Mamma is quite wearied out with the length of our engagement, and she says, she would do almost anything in gratitude for a person who would procure for Charles the presentation to this or any other living. Surely, Lord Crowbury could never refuse a direct request from the niece to whom he is so tenderly attached. We are ashamed to beg so imploringly, but the after-happiness of two lives may depend on what to Mrs. Atherton and her distinguished relative is merely a stroke of the pen."

"So far," observed Edith, as her mother refolded the letter, "is 'official.' But this scrap on a separate fragment of note-paper is 'private and confidential.' It is hurriedly indited, and evidently thrust into the envelope at the last minute 'unbeknowns,' as they say down here, to Mrs. Hammersley. 'Tis a little whispered 'aside,' in fact, between Lucy and myself; not meant in the least for your

eyes, mamma, I assure you. But the *pro memoria* is, to my mind, as important as the despatch. Here it is—‘Mamma has been standing over me and making me write all this at her dictation. I don’t like it at all. It is ill natured and horrid; and Salvia Richmond, let mamma say what she pleases, is as pretty as she can be. There! L. H.’ I declare, I quite like that great, clumsy, lispng Lucy Hammersley,” said Edith, placing away the correspondence, “and if Lord Crowbury were the least likely to give away his livings at our suggestion, which he is *not*, I should add my weight, mamma, in persuading you to write to your uncle, this magnifico.”

Mrs. Atherton could make no verbal comment for the present; so she groaned and rocked herself up and down.

“Had I reason to be vexed now?” inquired Edith, in a tone of triumphant annoyance.

“My love, you are an angel. You have borne it beautifully,” and Mrs. Atherton leant for consolation over her smelling-salts,

"You don't know the worst of it yet, mamma," faltered her daughter.

"Eh?" said Mrs. Atherton, looking up sharply.

"I don't mind telling you now," continued Edith, slowly smoothing along the table-cloth with her forefinger, "that for a week or two after Mrs. Glossop's party, this Mr. Leyland, whenever I walked out alone, was nearly sure to appear, hovering in the horizon. On several occasions he accompanied me for a short distance. I did not tell you this, mamma, because it would have only made you furious."

Mrs. Atherton, on being thus abruptly taken into confidence, seemed undecided whether to denounce her daughter or to embrace her. After a moment's reflection she adopted the milder expedient. "My poor child," she murmured, rather absently, for she was deliberating on what footing to accept these last confidences, "how badly this fellow has behaved to you!"

"Fiddlestick!" said Edith, tartly. "You

mean, how strangely we have behaved to him ! ”

Mrs. Atherton accepted the correction meekly. “ True, my love, my mind was wandering on another subject, when you recalled me.”

“ So that is settled,” observed Edith, with severe composure. “ I suppose I must put up with a mercantile alliance now. Mr. Ivory is very solid, and, oh, dear me ! so dreadfully genteel ; and Richard Leyland was much the nicest, even when I thought he had not a sixpence ; and now with Redburn Priory ! Heigho ! ’Tis no use fretting ; he is engaged, or as good as engaged, I suppose ; otherwise this Miss Richmond would not go about with him as she does.”

“ Would not she ?—just ! ” interposed Mrs. Atherton, with great bitterness. “ She hopes to walk him into an engagement.”

“ Then you think they are not engaged ? ” inquired Edith, quickly.

“ How should I know ? ” returned her mother, shrugging her shoulders. “ Young

men of rank don't treat girls of her class with much ceremony. He may or he may not have said something, which her self-conceit has twisted into an offer. I don't think it matters much either way. The point is to stop these continual meetings of theirs, and to stop them at once."

"You speak as if you could do it, mamma."

"Perhaps I can, Edith."

Confidence is infectious, and the young lady began to brighten up. "After all, he would quite throw himself away upon this girl," reasoned Edith, after a pause.

"It is not to be thought of," said Mrs. Atherton, firmly. "I am glad to find that the impression which you made in town upon him was deeper than I supposed. I do not say that I might have been earlier and with advantage taken into your confidence. Let that pass. If circumstances could renew the London impression, I really think Mr. Leyland might be detached from this clergyman's daughter."

"The only present impression," laughed

Edith, "on Mr. Leyland's mind concerning Tamerton Grange, or its inmates, is that he was marched out thence by a page-boy. I dare say, if it has reached Redburn, that he has also heard of the watch-dog. If so, a second impression will exist, like the warning inscribed on Farmer Digweed's premises, for all the tramps who run to read—'Beware of the dog!'"

"Do not lose heart, my love," consoled the mother. "I dare say, indeed, I feel sure, that all will yet come right. I should suggest your walking in the direction of Redburn now and then, during the next week or so. Meantime, I will call and see Mrs. Hammersley, who, after all, however tiresome, has her uses, and I will endeavour to ascertain more of this girl Richmond's antecedents."

"Oh, mamma; you speak of her like a maid-servant. She is, at least, better than that."

"I do not like her goings on," continued Mrs. Atherton, with a virtuous shiver, "and I do not care to estimate her social status with all this nicety. She seems to allow her-

self to be courted like a maid-servant, at any rate."

"And yet," meditated Edith, "I fancy Mrs. Hammersley would give her ears to substitute her Lucy, engaged as she is, for Miss Richmond."

"Very likely," responded Mrs. Atherton, in a matter-of-fact voice; "very likely. But one hint, Edith, my dear——"

"One or a hundred, mamma, I am too despondent not to be completely docile."

"If you should meet Mr. Leyland," pursued the mother, "in any of your walks, I think it would be as well for you to allow him to remain still under the impression, that I have a strong prejudice against him, which is *not* shared by you. My sudden conversion to his merits just now would seem suspicious, and might make him apprehend a pitfall. Now you, my dear, have always been his advocate, and so you can consistently continue. Let him suppose, if you do meet him, that I should be desperately angry. A little prohibition will add a spice of romance."

“And about Mr. Ivory?” reminded Edith, with a short laugh; “for with Mr. Ivory, you know, our song began. We have quite forgotten that worthy.”

“I shall see my way better,” spoke the mother, “as regards this second of your admirers, when I have had my talk with Mrs. Hammersley about this Richmond business. Meantime, keep Mr. Ivory in good humour, and don’t by any means dismiss him. But prevent him, if possible, from making any declaration, until we see more clearly how the land lies.”

“I am duly instructed,” answered Edith, with a curl of her lip.

“And now I shall order the carriage and drive over to Stonesdale,” concluded the elder lady; “and I should like, before I start, to glance once more at the postscript of Lucy Hammersley’s letter.”

CHAPTER V.

TRAINING FOR A SQUIRE.

MR. RUPERT IVORY duly installed himself at Tamerton Cottage, and, having sent for his household and several vans of furniture from London, he proceeded to make himself thoroughly at home in his new quarters. Ivory was both astute and energetic. He wished to cut a figure in Blankshire, and he was anxious to create a favourable impression there. Consequently, though he would haggle over a threepenny piece tendered for a fourpence in his office under Bow Bells, yet he saw that liberality and munificence must now be his game at Tamerton ; and he therefore, among these simple rustics, affected the character of a light-hearted and free-handed

creature, of ample means and extravagant proclivities. Besides, even in his apparently careless munificences, Ivory always had a shrewd eye to a return for his money, if not in kind, at least in popularity and consideration. A five-pound note, for example, to Mrs. Hammersley's Stonesdale schools, was a good investment ; because, as the most garrulous woman in Blankshire, her good word was a perpetual advertisement, as her bad report would have been an ever-ringing depreciation across every neighbouring luncheon-table at which that nomad intruded herself for a chance knife and fork. Then a ten-pound note to the Leatherbarrow Infirmary was an excellent bid for Blankshire esteem ; inasmuch as the infirmary was a very noisy, blatant, pushing charity, which printed and reprinted its lists of contributions up and down the leading county newspapers. More than this, the infirmary ball was the great Blankshire social gathering, and it was some sort of test of being a county somebody to be included in the flowing skirts of that Terpsichorean

charity as a patron or a lady patroness. 'Then Ivory felt sure that a few hundreds laid out in improving the capabilities of Tamerton Cottage, would make a mighty stir in a needy and stagnant neighbourhood, and show both exuberant resources and a determination of lasting settlement upon Blankshire soil.

Adoption into county society would, he foresaw, require patience, luck, and persistency, as even casual acquaintance with the magnates could only come by degrees. Ivory told himself that he must wait, and trust to that fortunate star, which in business had never deserted his path, to advance him step by step up the ladder of county consideration. With the smaller fry of squires, he would push; no man could elbow his way better. But in the more aristocratic Blankshire circles pushing might only entail upon him a perpetual ostracism. "Most haste" in the fine and rarefied atmosphere of the peers and baronets would certainly be "worst speed." It would never do to force an introduction. The Keblah point of Ivory's social aspiration was

the lord-lieutenant, Lord Agincourt, that fountain of all Blankshire honour. This nobleman had no salient tastes to speak of, beyond gastronomic ones; and the *parvenu*, after debating with himself whether to send the peer the finest turbot which Bond Street could produce, felt that till he had been presented to his lordship, such a gift might be deemed intrusive. But then the youthful Viscount St. Quentin, his lordship's heir-apparent, had a great taste for cricket; and, indeed, sometimes swathed himself in complete armour of pads and indiarubber for the honour of his native county in that noble game. Presto! Ivory subscribed to the cricket club, and endeavoured to acquire the rules of the national pastime. But as neither Ivory's age nor outline promised much proficiency in cricket, resumed so late in life, he was fain to content himself with the somewhat insipid *rôle* of a mere onlooker at the county matches.

But there were other rural matters at which he might hope more easily to get his hand in. The future owner of Redburn must of neces-

sity be somewhat of an expert in field sports. Similarity of pursuits is a great bond of friendship. The freeborn Briton always despises a man who does not spend his time as he does. To the preserver of foxes, the human race was created and placed in Eden for that especial purpose and no other. To the breeder of pheasants, the world is one vast system of hutches, buckwheat, and sitting hens. Now all the Blankshire squires were divided between these two opinions: some held it wiser to pursue one beast on horseback; some to destroy many on foot. At any rate, the destruction of animal life constituted, in one form or the other, the *summum bonum* of a Blankshire squire, and the only life and occupation fit for a man of breeding and spirit. So Ivory felt that he must forthwith become a sportsman, if he hoped for ultimate absorption and affiliation into the charmed circle of Blankshire gentility.

He took his measures accordingly, with energy and deliberation. In the first place,

during a recent run up to town, he had been much struck with a cheap and showy suit in the window of a Holborn outfitter. This he incontinently purchased. The ticket described it in spacious letters as appropriate for "loch, moor, and fell," and though the last two terms in physical geography did not convey any very definite explanation to Ivory's mind, possibly they had impressed him all the more for that very reason. Certainly, the pattern of the suit was so portentously barred and chequered, that it is difficult to conceive any of the *feræ naturæ*, "on moor or fell," not being frightened into convulsions by its approach anywhere within their visual range. However, Ivory was much pleased with the attire, which seemed to him to set off his own portly lineaments to great advantage. He added on this visit a few more sporting items—a game-bag, curiously netted and fringed, a vast salmon-rod, like the mast of a schooner taken to bits, a pocket-book full of salmon flies, a fishing basket, a landing-net, a fowling-piece, a magazine of cartridges, a dog-whip, and a

key-bugle. The last article he weakly purchased, on a general assurance from the shop-keeper that no sporting outfit was complete without it.

With this panoply he descended upon Blankshire, and announced himself ready to begin. But some delay was interposed before he could commence his sporting career, by an unforeseen difficulty. The acreage which he held with Tamerton Cottage was far too small for his aspirations. The whole length and breadth of his domain could only produce some three coveys of birds, an intermittent hare, a stray pheasant, and about a dozen rabbits, who were either underground when required for Mr. Ivory's aim, or who disappeared in that subterranean direction after his first shot. As to any stream for the angler, the widow's territory was unrefreshed by even a purling rill. This was a great disappointment. The advertisement of Tamer-ton Cottage, when to let, had offered, among other inducements, the right of sporting over thirty acres of land. The right Ivory now

found he unquestionably had, yet with one drawback, there was nothing to sport against. But Ivory determined not to be beaten. Sporting he would have, and that without loss of time. It was merely, he argued, a question of paying. So, by trumpeting his requirements on the Blankshire house-tops, and at the market-crosses, and by announcing, with infinite ostentation, that rent would be no consideration to one pining, like he was, to take the field—he presently succeeded in leasing a manor some five miles from Tamer-ton, of good extent and varied capabilities. It contained one or two small coverts, some excellent partridge shooting, and a stretch, some half-mile in length, of the trout-famed river Bavon. Ivory arranged that the old staff of gamekeepers should remain on. This expedient solved a world of difficulties. The dogs, traps, nets, and other sporting plant, he also prudently arranged to relieve the outgoing tenant of, at a valuation. This was one Captain Charles Mayne, of the Blankshire militia, and the actual owner of the manor

was a minor, a ward of the High Court of Chancery.


The gamekeepers, who thus passed with the soil into Ivory's service, were a hoary-headed reprobate, in velveteen and drab continuations, with a mulberry face and a wall-eye. With this worthy were associated his two lanky, grown-up sons, who were remarkable in no particular way except in being at continual variance with each other. The father was named Jeremiah Pickett, and the sons were Silas and Jonah Pickett respectively. The whole family were seldom found outside the public-house after two o'clock in the afternoon. When in office they were gamekeepers, when in opposition, poachers. The receipt of wages constituted them one or the other. Their lives and occupations in either capacity were much the same.

When preliminaries were arranged, Ivory in high spirits donned the suit for the "loch, moor, and fell," and essayed, in the first instance, a fishing expedition upon his new dominion. The hopeful Pickett family duly

received their new employer, as he alighted from his carriage at the nearest road-point to that part of the river Bavon which had now passed into his sway. Ivory's get-up was beyond question very imposing, and portended a great destruction of fish. He wore a Tyrolese hat, with an immense rainbow-winged salmon-fly as a species of cockade at the side of it; large, high fishing-boots, and a wicker basket on his back. At a distance his attire looked something between a chess-board and a window-blind. In his hand was the vast salmon-rod, still in pieces, like a weaver's beam, or more irreverently, like the implements of a chimney-sweeper.

So he strode to Bavon banks; and, producing a dumpy pocket-book crammed with dædal salmon-flies, Ivory knowingly appealed to old Jeremiah, as to which specimen seemed most suitable for the stream and the grey overcast morning. Jerry, after a brief and contemptuous survey of the selection, swore, with dreadful imprecations, that such lackadaisical mops of coloured feathers would scare all


the Bavon fish to the other side of beyond—a vague and terrible expression, apparently signifying to a great distance, in the local dialect. Ivory persisted that he had bought the flies at some expense, and meant to try them. What did “Muster expect to catch with them there? Did Muster expect a trout to swallow a fly as broad as himself?” Ivory calmly informed his satellites, that he despised to catch such puny fry as trout, and that he was fishing for a far nobler quarry, the salmon. Thereupon the venerable Jerry glanced at his son Silas, and wished himself felicitated. Silas looked at his brother Jonah, and repeated the parental formula. Jonah, having no one to appeal to, kicked his retriever, and felicitated that unoffending animal. Then the whole family relieved their oppressed feelings by cursing at large and in chorus for some moments. When they became articulate enough for conversational, as opposed to imprecational speech, they informed Ivory that a salmon was as likely as a crocodile in a Blankshire stream.



Ivory looked grim and deeply disappointed; but, shrugging his shoulders, he consented to put up with the insignificant trout for the nonce. Now must Silas Pickett, long of leg, scour off hastily to the gamekeeper's dwelling for tackle more appropriate; and in due course returned with an old, light, pliable rod and a few small midge-like artificial flies. These Ivory accepted disdainfully. It seemed as if the giant in the song, who had baited his hook with a dragon's tail, and sat on a rock and bobbed for whale, had been brought down so low as to accept the thread and crooked pin of the Serpentine stickleback fisher. Thus equipped, however, Ivory endeavoured manfully to fill the fishing-basket, with which, in anticipation of a heavy catch, he had girded himself.

Now to the inexperienced onlooker, nothing in the world seems more childishly easy than throwing a trout-line. Ivory held at least this opinion as he bent jauntily over gently flowing Bavon, and began to whip its waves. He commenced with no misgivings, but, alas!

nothing comes right at first to a beginner. At one moment, his flies hung dangling in one of the pollard willows which fringed the river at this point; at another, his line was intervolved in a treacherous water-root. The Pickett family had that morning no sinecure. Division of labour is everything in all branches of industry. Therefore, Silas Pickett, as youngest and most lissom of the staff, soon settled down to the land service, and led a kind of aerial existence, swarming the various trees into which Ivory managed intermittently to get his erratic line fixed. On the other hand, Jonah Pickett, not inappropriately to his name, took to the water service, and passed the day as a species of human otter, in rescuing Ivory's flies from the "long mosses of the stream," and from stubborn entanglements with unseen rocks beneath the surface. Yet, despite all these precautions, Ivory's sport on Bavon banks was doomed to close prematurely. For when he was so placed that he must get a clear cast, an ominous "ping," sounded high up in air




behind him, would often announce that he had whipped off another artificial fly into space. Thus the Pickett stock ran out in no time. The fish were rising in every direction. It was most tantalizing. Yet Ivory could not raise, much less hook, a single one. At length he threw down his rod in a pet, and banned Isaac Walton and all the gentle craft. Sulkily enough, Ivory trudged home on foot, for the splendours of his waggonette had not been ordered till hours afterwards.

Yet he might do better with the partridges; indeed, Ivory felt assured that he must prosper more with the manly gun than with the tame and insipid angle. At the close of the first day he had emptied a powder flask and a half. That was something. The neighbours round at all events would know Mr. Ivory had been out shooting; just as Brussels could not ignore the guns of Waterloo. In other respects, however, the sport had been hardly good. Ivory had killed nothing outright. But this was, on the whole, fortunate; for had anything been so

despatched, it would have been apparently of a nature hardly reducible to the category of "game."

There was, therefore, as our readers may infer, a list of wounded. First, one of the liver-coloured pointers, whom Ivory incapacitated, at a range of thirty yards, for the rest of the season. Secondly, an old cottage dame, who was drying clothes in her back garden, and received a perfect shower-bath of Ivory's pellets upon her face and bare arms. Luckily, the shot was too far spent to penetrate, except in two or three cases, but Mrs. Dunn dropped instantaneously, and Ivory felt for some moments very uncomfortable; till she picked herself up again, bellowing like a bull, and invoking all the terrors of the law against Ivory, whom in her excitement she styled her murderer. A sovereign, to which Jerry's personal knowledge of Mrs. Dunn suggested the addition of a bottle of gin, tranquillized matters; but Ivory's nerves were too far upset for further partridge practice for some days,



When the effect of Mrs. Dunn's tragedy had worn off, towards the week's end, Ivory once more took the field. He hit upon the crafty expedient of promising the Pickett family a bonus of a shilling a head for every animal that fell to his gun. So the day began brilliantly; for Jonah, having marked a rabbit grazing at the covert-side, stalked it, hugging the bushes with stealthy steps, Ivory following in his wake, with his gun at full cock, and hardly daring to breathe. Thus Jonah managed to secure for his master an advantageous sitting shot, and, to Ivory's great triumph, over rolled the rabbit, and was duly bagged, the firstfruits of his prowess. A large covey of birds was then marked down to an inch, and Ivory, firing into the thick of them, knocked out several feathers. Intoxicated at these evident signs of progress, a turnip field was next entered. Presently, a brown form was flushed by their advance, and glided furtively away down the turnip-covered ridges before them. Ivory raised his gun.

“Don’t ye fire, for the Lord’s sake, Muster Ivory!” shrieked the elder Pickett.

Silas rushed at his employer, and endeavoured to strike up his barrels. Too late! With unerring precision of aim the charge took effect; the brown form lay prostrate in the furrow, fifty yards ahead.

Ivory’s brow grew radiant with victory. “Why did you tell me not to fire? I suppose you thought I could not hit it,” he said, sternly.

“I know’d thee could hit he!” returned Silas, in great bitterness. “Shots like thee allus hit what they shouldn’t.”

The venerable Jerry looked pale, and seemed rooted to the ground. He clasped his forehead distractedly, and flung off his hat. “Run for a spade, mun,” he muttered, hoarsely, to his youngest son—“a spade, a pitch-fork—two of ’em; run for thy life, mun. Thee has done it now, Squire Ivory.”

“Is it a child?” demanded Ivory, with a dry gulp. “Don’t tell me it’s a cottager’s child, Jerry. I saw fur, by the Lord, I did!”

Even at that supreme moment, to be called "squire" sounded most sweet upon Ivory's ears. He had never been so addressed before. Jerry's excitement had taken his late owner's title, and applied it instinctively to his present master.

"A child!" ejaculated old Pickett, his grey locks streaming to the wind. "I wish it had been fifty of them there children. We can breed children with half the trouble."

"And preserve them, too, father," added his son Jonah, with a ghastly grin.

"I should think so!" exclaimed Jerry, indignantly. "If the Honourable Tom Holster were to enter this identical field afore we gets him buried—can you see Silas a-coming yet?—it would be, 'Lord have mercy upon us,' for three mortal men! O Squire Ivory, how could you go to do it?"

"Have I shot Mr. Holster's favourite dog, then?" inquired Ivory, a little relieved, but still uneasy.

"Dawg be jiggered!" said Jonah, rudely.

"Or cat?" hazarded Ivory; "the tail was something like a cat's, now I think of it."

"Go and find out for thyself," bade old Pickett, roughly.

"I hardly like to," hesitated Ivory. "It may not be 'quite dead, and wounded animals are generally dangerous."

"I won't touch 'un till I get a shovel," said Jerry, firmly.

Silas was now seen returning with the longed-for implements.

"Did any one see you take 'em?" inquired the other brother, in the voice of a conspirator.

"Where mun we dig his grave, feyther?" said Silas, in a hoarse whisper, for he was sorely out of breath.

The patriarch stood scratching his head, and did not reply at first. Presently he stepped towards Ivory, and rather uncere- moniously took him by the button-hole, while he whispered, "We shall expect a matter of a fi'-pun' note among me and my boys to keep this quiet, squire."

"I shall see what I have killed first," said Ivory, putting Jerry back. "You are insolent, my good fellow, you are insolent. Is

it quite dead?" This last spoken to son Silas, who was in front turning over the slain beast with a shovel. Ivory approached him warily, gazed on the slain, hesitated, and then pronounced, "A fox? Is that all?"

Such dire insensibility was too much for these three honest sons of the glebe. All their traditional reverence, all they had learnt to honour and obey in their simple village school, rose up in revolt and indignation at the apathy of the citizen. Jeremiah, the patriarch, glanced at his sons, and reading that their wishes were his own, became the spokesman of the family—in fact, to one who looks below the surface of the thing, the spokesman of the public opinion of Blankshire, "Muster Ivory, we are poor men and can't afford to fling up our places. Vittal is hard to get, and drink is dear to buy. You might have blow'd yourself or Mrs. Dunn to ribbons" ("As he will do some of these days," quoth Silas, in a hurried parenthesis) "afore we would have left you. You pays well and makes no inquiries. Let all men have their

‘doo.’ You might have maimed dawgs or childer without number. It isn’t *that* we mind. But our character is at stakes, and good name is ‘everythink’ to us as keepers, and we give you warning this day month.”

“Warning this day month,” nodded Silas.

“This day month,” echoed Jonah, spitting a straw out.

Thus closed the sporting career of Mr. Rupert Ivory in Blankshire.

CHAPTER VI.

SALVIA'S RECORD.

MY poor old journal, of late thou hast suffered grievous neglect. Nearly a month, and not one entry made! The reason is a very strange one—I have been too happy to write! They say that nations are most prosperous when their annals have least to record. So it may be, by analogy, with that humblest of national units—a girl. In the old days, O my journal, thy pages are blotted with vague discontent. They groan with shadowy sorrow. The trouble of a rose leaf creases their smooth sides. The distress of a dream folds down a leaf-corner. But now, full-tided joy has quieted my querulous pen, and the pages of my life-chronicle have remained white and

virgin, as the star of the low sky near the sea.

The old times ! As a painter proves his work, I hold these away at a distance, to try them, these old times. They are not, as men measure hours, so long and long ago. And yet they seem ages and centuries behind me. My life, then, lay like an ashen-coloured, restless surface of wave, heaving slow beneath some trouble of grey-browed cloud. But God's hand has come forth, and, touching the chaos of my deep, has said, ' Let there be light ; ' ' and there was light.'

Light and love, for love is light—coevals and coequals, they inherit one birth and one destruction. The curtain of the night uplifts, the day begins. The mist that brooded between cloud and wave is passed away. The strange new light is risen. Ay me ! not strange nor new, for that meteor of the morn has dawned on thousands ere it dawned on me. And yet, to each and all of us, it has come revealed as some strange secret, fire-new from the treasury of God. It breathes upon

me, and I have begun to live. To vegetate, to feel merely physical life, to apprehend neither reason nor end for one's existence; thus was I hitherto. Plant and bird are content to be. They inquire no further. That suffices them. But when Love comes—the word of doom is written—all the ravelled threads of this disordered and unwoven soul assume their order, and become shades and hues, divinely interpassing, of a glorious weft, dædal-tinted from the palms of weaving, fateful angels. When Love comes, then we stand at last eye to eye, confronted with the ordeal of our destiny. There are two issues in the hands of Love—eternal peace, eternal martyrdom. Arise; the hour is here. Kneel to the shrouded image of the god; kneel in the shrine where all the nations come; and ask, “Deal out my lot and portion, lord: O oppressor from the beginning, O paraclete from everlasting! Let me receive thy torture or thy comfort! I have read of thee in my foolish tales, being yet a child, child-hearted; I knew not then my day of visitation. Now I meet thee palm to

palm. Unroll, O deity, thy veil, and fulfil me with the aspect of thy beauty. Shall I not be contented with thy full beatitudes? What do I know, as yet having merely seen thy outward raiment hem passing in shadow across a rose leaf? I have but faintly heard the trailing of thy garments, the sliding kiss of thy feet over dreamy floors of ivory; I have only found in corridors a hint of thy going through, in ante-rooms a fragrance, where thou hast lately passed, as when the anther-dust of violets is washed out in rainy April." And he, the child-king, in his shrouding robes of amethyst, shall say, "Thou poor, forlorn one! in thy humble home hast thou also found me? Art thou not too obscure to tread the burning paths of the garden of my house? Back to thy homely village street, back to thy little nest in a fold of the great chalk down! For thou art too ignoble to become my pilgrim, to sew on thy shoulder my mother's shells. But since thou must and wilt be wise with the disastrous wisdom of the mother of thy mothers, bend

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down and taste the cup of pain, the bowl of my enchantments. Pale is my hand that gives it out to thee. The dregs of it are red, red as the eyebrows of the sunset. Many races have sought unto my cup. Many ages have knelt down and risen, murmuring, 'It is good.' As honey cells in the beginning, as adder-froth in the after-taste; as a rose on the outer lip, as rust of brass in the inner throat. Have thy draught! None ever yet drew back their mouth for warning. Thou wilt not fast from love for hint of after-sorrow." And I drank of this cup, and awoke. And the dream was gone, and these are words of it.

Well, well; this is a weird entry to begin my neglected journal afresh with! I suppose I ought to score my pen through all this rhapsody. Still, yonder thrush is singing very wildly in the thicket under my window. And that sober old rook on the elm protests with an intermittent and prosaic croak against this ridiculous dithyramb. Which things are an allegory, and my poor spontaneous entry

shall stand. I shall not have many laughers, and they will soon be tired.

Now for prose and my interrupted narrative. I have written how my composure utterly forsook me at the passing panorama of the Hammersley family enveloped in a volume of dust. We left that dreadful inn, and Mr. Leyland was very kind in cheering me up again. He insisted on treating the whole Hammersley incident as an excellent joke; but, alas! I knew the vicar's wife too well not to fear that the story, as coloured through the medium of her exuberant fancy, would be presently spread over three parishes.

We reached Collingridge in about half an hour from the Flowing Spring, and there Mr. Leyland procured a dog-cart, in which he and I sat in front, and David with the dogs behind. We must have seemed a curious party. Mr. Richard, of course, drove. In this vehicle, the five miles which lay between Collingridge and Redburn were speedily and luxuriously accomplished. I insisted, however, upon being put down a little short of Redburn



street, as there seemed no necessity to brave public opinion by appearing with so sporting an escort in my native village. Exhausted as I was, I had thus to trudge the short remaining journey on foot and alone. Being dead beat, I had much ado to drag my failing limbs to the door of Redburn vicarage. I did not enter at once. Somehow, I shrank from the long explanation, which I should have to give my father, of why I came with such a geological variety of Blankshire soils adherent to my skirts. Had I only been prompt-minded enough to search the sand-hills, where the accident occurred, for a new snail or two, I should have had some preface and pretext with which to present myself. I stood in our porch looking back upon the way which I had come, and the honeysuckle brushed my hot face and disordered hair with its cool, honey-breathing bunches. I felt, somehow, very lonely and half unwilling to re-enter the old life.

The vicar had done his supper, and was deep in the pages of the *Conchological*

Magazine. Fortunately for me, that periodical, which never appeared punctually to its date, had been delivered only by that mid-day post. I suppose that writing about snails made its conductors dilatory. The vicar had been very busy all day in the parish, and had saved his monthly treat for a *bonne bouche* after supper. The pages of the current number had just been cut, and the vicar's armchair drawn up comfortably under the beams of his green-shaded reading-lamp; but, alas! my father's anticipated scientific tit-bit had proved wormwood instead of honey. So that, when I re-entered, instead of the running fire of questions which I expected on my long-delayed return, the vicar was vociferous to recite his own wrongs and molluscan indignities. The ungrateful editor, a fellow (to use my father's words) whom he had heaped with specimens and benefits, had admitted into his columns for that month a violent and unseemly onslaught on some pet theories of my parent's, about, I think he called it, the hybernation of snails. This


was penned by a rival collector, who, he said, had written a catchpenny manual, called "Britain Illustrated in Snail Zones," a work both showy and superficial, full of grievous heresies and wholesale plagiarisms from the unacknowledged labours and anterior discoveries of the Rev. Hamilton Richmond.

After outpouring all the verbal vials of his wrath upon this arch-heretic, to which denunciation I accorded the best attention which my aching forehead could command, the vicar arranged himself before his stationery for a scathingly written reply to appear next month. And I was allowed, nay, even advised, to retire to bed, unquestioned.

Next morning, as I dressed, I wished very keenly that I had a better gown in which to array myself, than the inevitable, and to some extent dilapidated, blue serge, in which the present deponent had been for the last two months accustomed to traverse the lanes and downs of her native hamlet. Now, although I had not cared *much* about dress in the old days, still I had cared something. Every girl

does, let her protest the contrary as much as she pleases. Had I then become vain all of a sudden? A day or two back, when Lady Leyland drove in her carriage through the village, exquisitely dressed, I took it philosophically enough, that her lot in life should be satin and velvet, and mine serge and calico. "She has no troubles," I told myself, "her only anxiety is how to look handsome; she is the lily and I am the restharrow. She neither toils nor spins; I must stitch and darn. She floats through life upon C-springs; I jolt through it as if in Farmer Digweed's market cart." (Only, to see after it has passed you, how it jogs poor Mrs. Digweed's elbows!)

But on this particular morning all my vaunted stoicism on the subject of millinery had evaporated. Never had my few poor dresses looked so mean, so thoroughly out of date. Well, I could do nothing, I could settle to nothing. There was a sad arrear of hemming in our new kitchen dusters, and yet there seemed a certain monotony



in a close room and a pile of unbleached household linen, as compared with the sunshine and the wide fresh downs, where every bird and insect was out for its holiday. Perish the kitchen dusters! How they do hurt one's fingers! 'Tis like sewing the sail of a man-of-war! Yonder thrush has no kitchen dusters in arrear. I will take a walk, and perhaps Robin Goodfellow will hem them for me while I am away. "But you were out and idle all yesterday," whispers Conscience. "And so I mean to be to-day," returns illogical Indolence. "Not half the pots of new-made jam are labelled," insists the inward monitor. "So much the more excitement in the winter, when we are about to enterprise a tart. Our selection will then be a lottery, a blind choosing, like life or—well, like matrimony." So suggests humourous Idleness. I meant to take a walk, and, in short, I took one.

I listened at the vicar's study door as I passed. In a low, droning tone I heard him inside, declaiming aloud portions of the

"reply." I just slipped in to say good-bye to him, and my father told me that he had called his opponent "no conchologist," and did I think this too strong, having in view the great provocation received? I demanded whether, in my father's scientific circles, this was equivalent to calling a person "no gentleman," and my father allowed that it was rather worse. So, having advised the excision of this questionable paragraph, I tripped forth. I began to think that I would go up to Stonesdale Ridge. It was a nice day for—the view. I fancy that I had meant to go there all along; and I don't think I was very much surprised to find Mr. Leyland sitting already on the cairn.

"Do you know," he began, "that I have been trying mesmeric effects between mind and mind through an intervening medium of over three quarters of a mile of atmosphere. And, after about forty minutes of volition, I have drawn you up here?"

I think that I understood this; but I asked him to explain further.

"You see," he pursued, gaily; "letter A represents the mind of a gentleman on a hill, and B the mind of a young lady in a room in a valley, let us say, a mile below A. Now, if A wishes *hard enough* for B to come to him, some folks believe that B must come to him—'willy nilly,' as the rustics say."

"I don't believe a word of it," I said, with a resolute head-shake, and yet I was not quite so sceptical as I wished to appear.

"Why not?" insisted Mr. Leyland. "I don't see, why the human brain should be weaker than the weakest galvanic battery. Now A, that enterprising abstraction, does not wish to send his tiny spark to China or Egypt; only hence down through that little white chimney above the porch of honeysuckle."

"Thank you for your tiny spark," I returned, flippantly, to change his serious tone, for I was really a little staggered by his theories.

"I won't be put aside by Dr. Watts," he laughed, "till I have said my say and drawn

my conclusion. Now, if A says he will draw up B, and B comes, the experiment has succeeded, and the theory, on which it was based, is proven true. B's incredulity cannot shake A's now scientific induction. In fact, B is the proof herself; and the demonstration is irrefragable."

"But suppose B goes down again at once, and refuses to stay another moment?" I observed, colouring, for I really wished to dismiss the topic, and did not relish it at all.

"Don't," said Mr. Leyland, piteously.

"That is no answer at all," I exclaimed, taking him up short. "In the first place, to whom is this 'don't' of yours addressed?"

"To the abstraction B," he confessed, in a penitent voice. "To the abstraction B, not to abstract herself."

"Then let me tell you," I replied, mollified, and resuming my seat, "that young ladies—I mean abstractions—don't like being drawn where they have no intention of going, and don't mean to submit to it."

"I am penitence itself, Miss Richmond;

but do tell me what made you come. I abandon, since you wish it, the mesmeric theory."

"The dusters made me come," I blurted out, in a burst of impetuous candour. "I only wish that you knew what a cross-grained, impenetrable, adamantine, heart-breaking, needle-blunting, finger-hurting—Beast!"

"Eh?" interposed Mr. Richard, quickly glancing up. "Are we still speaking of the duster?"

"Well, then, 'companion'; will that do?" I amended, with an impatient gesture.

"Don't suppose I wish to champion our friend the duster," he went on, with a wave of the arm. "I merely venture to observe that, as the daughter of a naturalist, your arrangement of the animal kingdom is vague, not to say hazy, and does not do credit to your home opportunities."

"They say, the goldsmith's daughter never wears jewels," I submitted, in extenuation.

"In this case the naturalist's daughter

needs none," he returned, looking me full in the face.

"What should I want with jewels?" I replied, a little sadly. "I fear their rich, heartless glitter. I should not dare to wear them. I should feel like a russet hedge-sparrow in the plumes of a kingfisher."

"Suppose now," he proceeded, with a certain hesitating slyness, "we narrow this general and most strong-minded denunciation of ornaments to a practical and slightly personal application. Example is better than precept. For instance, on the second finger of abstraction B's left hand, unless my sight deceives me, I perceive some approach—let us say—to a ring."

"A fine jewel, indeed!" I protested, indignantly; "only a poor little ring of garnets. It came from Germany."

"Walked thence; all by itself, in fact, Miss Richmond," he threw in, coolly.

I knew what he meant, but I did not see why I should equivocate, so I returned, "Oh, no; it was given me; in fact, a person brought it me from Germany."

"A poor little person," he echoed, playing with my parasol, "brought a poor little ring to a nice little abstraction. I hate Germany!" he added, with a sudden change of tone; "'tis the dullest country in Europe. I can't think why people go there."

"But, Mr. Leyland," I suggested, with mock humility, "if people happen to be born in Germany——"

"Then the ring was a German?" he put in, disconsolately, with a pained face; and, I fancy, he added under his voice, "Confound him!"

I left things where they were, as it was really very pleasant teasing him. Presently, he asked me to let him examine my ring.

"Now while I am looking at this," he said, carelessly—"and I don't mean to be hurried in my inspection; for our friend, the German, may have inscribed a microscopic posy on the inner rim, which I mean to decipher; suppose, Miss Richmond, you meantime cast your eye—a phrase of Digweed's—over my poor little ring, which has

the misfortune to be merely British." He unwrapped a handsome diamond half-hoop ring from a little scrap of silver paper, and tossed it across disparagingly.

"It is very beautiful," said I, quietly. "How wonderful the colours are, and yet—is this a lady's ring?"

"Assuredly; my poor mother's."

A pause of some moments. I sat quite still, and heard my heart beating wildly in my ears. There was the small vicarage beneath us, and I wished I was back there.

"Suppose we change rings, Miss Salvia."

"I won't suppose anything of the kind," I protested, resolutely. "Take this back at once, Mr. Leyland; I insist."

He looked very crestfallen; and began to pluck the thyme stalks around at a great pace and to fling them again as rapidly away. "Try it on, at any rate," he entreated; "do my poor jewel so much grace."

As a daughter of Eve, I was ready enough to accede to this request.

"And now just put your hand out for me

to observe the effect," he continued, with his head on one side. "That looks very pretty, and the ring seems as if it were made for the finger. You would never guess what I am now wishing for, if you were to try till—what shall we say?—till Digweed thinks a neighbour's turnips finer than his own. Take three guesses, Miss Salvia."

"I can't guess," I said, hurriedly. "I won't guess."

"A wasp, Miss Richmond; at the present moment, my kingdom—if I had one—for a wasp!" I suppose my looks showed some consternation at this requirement, for he went on, "Oh for the angriest wasp in Blankshire, imprisoned in one of your father's pill-boxes!—— Have you ever read Southey's 'Kehama'? When the destroyer is about to draw off his protecting ring at the desire of the wizard assassin, at that moment Heaven sends a bee, which stings the finger above the ring, so that it cannot be drawn off across the swollen joint. Do you read my parable now, O fair lady?"

I plucked off Mr. Leyland's diamond ring in a panic of alarm, and pressed it tremblingly back upon him. He wrapped it up again with great reluctance, smiling all the while at my extreme haste and anxiety to unhoop my finger. A moment after, I felt vexed to death with myself for my naive exhibition of dismay.


"Be not disturbed, Miss Richmond," he consoled, mockingly. "There is not even a drone in sight."

"Except your worship." A poor joke, but I fenced to hide my increasing confusion.

"A reasonable exception," he laughed, "and a palpable hit. Well then, as destiny refuses to intercede in my favour, and declines to send so much as a bumblebee; I presume, as you have scornfully restored my property, that I ought to do as much by our Teutonic friend."

"That understands itself," I replied, nodding.

"Then we know some German?" he observed, curiously. "Our idioms at least are of that mint."



I rigidly refused to enlighten him.

"Then, here are your garnets," he said, in accents of irritation; "and we are much where we began."

"Much where we began," I repeated, obstinately mysterious.

"Except," he seemed to say it as if he felt not quite sure of his ground, "that between abstraction A and abstraction B there has intervened an indefinite quantity of a German *x*."

I felt inclined to laugh outright at this. But, inasmuch as Mr. Leyland had really no right to go on catechizing me, I looked grave; just to punish him for the Coliseum young lady in her silk dress.

"I mean to bring you back something," he persisted, returning to the charge, "when I next start upon my travels. Having the bad luck to be an Englishman, I must not venture to present rings. Suppose my next journey got me no further than Brighton; would even a mug thence from me be accepted? I greatly doubt it. But, meantime, as to the details of

this Brighton mug; if your Christian name were common, you should have one appropriately inscribed. 'A present for Jane, Susan, Sally, Mary Anne,' is kept in stock; 'A present for Salvia' would be hopeless to procure. It will have to be the vaguer, 'A trifle from Brighton,' or let us see, yes, better still, 'A present for a good girl!'"

I told Mr. Leyland that he was very tiresome, and that most people would be seriously angry. He opined that "most people" were obstinate, and that he only required three words of explanation, but that these three words I resolutely and obdurately withheld.

"And pray," said I, bridling a little, "what right have you to require, not three, but one word of explanation from me?"

"Because," he said, in a changed tone, "of the very deep interest, which the most trivial detail of your life possesses for me, Miss Richmond."

I flushed a little at this, and rejoined, impetuously, "Then you ought to trust me, Mr. Leyland, more. Just be reasonable, as

you gentlemen never can be. It is you that make women so deceitful. You insist on having everything explained, everything tabulated, everything classed, arranged, ticketed. Now, there are many things in life—especially in a girl's life—to which none of these processes can be applied. We live illogically, fancifully, by impulse, by aspiration. For instance, you see that fragment of rainbow meeting earth over Stembury. Suppose you said to me 'This iris is all very fine, but sadly indefinite; I insist on knowing exactly where one colour ends and where another begins——' ”

“Enough, Miss Richmond; I am conquered. I haul down my flag. Not one question more will I ask about this mysterious Teuton. And now, will you forgive me? ”

“I have nothing to forgive; but I forgive you freely.”

“Thank you. I breathe again. I whistle away Arminius to the winds. He is dissolved into the vapours of which he was bred. I am myself once more. So do let us be

amiable for the short remainder of your stay to-day in these altitudes."

"My time is up already," I answered, rising to depart. "Please restore me my parasol, Mr. Leyland."

"And you won't ever climb aloft to this beacon of calamity again?"

"Have I said so?" I asked.

"No, but you looked like it three minutes back."

"You vexed me. I have forgiven you since."

"Might I, then, humbly suggest to-morrow, weather permitting, to ratify my complete pardon and to arrange a permanent basis of reconciliation?"

"Impossible," I returned, with a slight asperity; "to-morrow is dusters, and to-morrow is jam-pots."

"Then Thursday, Miss Richmond?"

"Perhaps." And with that "perhaps" I left him.

Here I have come in my journal to an abrupt pause. I meant to write on unflinch-

ingly. I meant to write on for myself to read when I should be old and grey-headed. I meant to write on perchance for him to read some day, when my chair would be vacant beside him. But now that I have come to the point, with my pen dipped in the ink and the clean diary page spread out before me, a kind of shudder has seized me, and I have stopped dead short.

I find that I cannot write about—my happiness. It seems almost wrong for me to do so; even if I could choose such words, such sentences as would transmit the living tones, the tender thrills, the mighty silences that mean so much. How can I write down the words of the song and leave out its music? I can say of that arc of rainbow, which fronted the sunset as we parted, that its violet melted into amethyst, that its ambers throbbed away into crimson. “O poor, dead word-ghost of a rainbow! O poor, dead word-ghost of a love-meeting! I will not set you down.”

Yet something must be written, although

I hardly know how to proceed. We met in halcyon reconciliation on the next Thursday. We have also met on Stonesdale Ridge, some six times since. I think—I am sure now, that he cares about me. I am very happy. What more can I write? All is summed up in those few simple words. Yesterday, he was to have come, but he never came. I was hardly disappointed. I wished for space to rest and time to breathe. The wings of my great joy had swept me on with such fierce speed, that I longed to touch earth again, and look around me. I found it very sweet to be on Stonesdale Ridge alone, and to think about him. And then I know full well why Richard Leyland failed me for the first time yesterday.

The last evening we met, just as we were parting and just before—well, just before something, he told me that, ere he saw me again, he meant to have a talk with Sir Sidney. Richard added that he had received more than one caution from his uncle, not to build on anything which idle gossips or

indiscreet tattlers told him respecting the Redburn property. Sir Sidney had even allowed that his own position was involved and precarious. "So," said Richard, "after this clear notice that I am to expect nothing from my uncle, I consider myself as nowise responsible to him for my actions. Yet, as my nearest, and indeed, my only surviving relation, it is, perhaps, right that I should consult him and take him in a measure into my confidence; and this talk with him will necessitate a still longer talk with Salvia" (so he called me now) "afterwards."

On those words he went away. His not coming the next day must merely mean that Sir Sidney was busy, or had company—as there nearly always is at the Priory; and Richard could find no convenient opportunity at which to introduce the subject of his own affairs. After his parting resolve, Richard, doubtless, did not like seeing me again till he had sounded his uncle. So it must be, and meantime I wait hopefully, anxiously, and not unhappily.

The next few days and their events cannot fail to be among the most important in my life for weal or for woe. I have as yet no presentiment of evil, though he did not come. To-morrow, I shall see him again among the orchids and the thyme. To-morrow, we shall meet, as we are wont, at the poor wanderer's cairn, whom my lover so much resembles. Fate did not bring Richard across the hill to meet me there if it meant to take Richard away again. All will be well. Yonder sun goes down in golden promise as I write. I have no presentiment of coming sorrow.

CHAPTER VII.

AN ANONYMOUS LETTER.

WHEN Richard walked down Stonesdale Ridge after his last meeting with Salvia Richmond, though he had spoken, while still in her presence, airily and independently of the impending explanation with his uncle; yet, as he approached the Priory gates, the difficulties of such an interview crowded upon him with increased force at every onward step of his return. During the last fortnight Richard had abandoned himself to a delicious fool's paradise; he had made love, as children do, without thinking much what was to come of it.


He had not paused to inquire how the social fictions and requirements of this highly

complicated machine, the nineteenth century, could or would be made to adjust themselves towards the special love case of this particular Phillis and Strephon. Now our Strephon was neither foolish nor improvident; but the Arcadia among the Blankshire sheep-walks had been so pleasant, that the swain had said, "I will let myself drift for a week or so in my world of lambs and daisies and pink ribbons. Why should I yet translate the spontaneous 'I love you' of the shepherd of Arcady into the premeditated 'I will love you, Phillis, provided so and so' of the barbarous outer world?" If Strephon ever, indeed, put the future at all definitely before his eyes, he would sigh out such utterances as these—"Grant me one week, O Love, in thy sweet oblivion of respects; give me some hours untroubled by the sorrowful hereafter! Then I will go down to rich old Menalcas, my uncle, and see if anything can be done towards setting up a cote and a thick-fleeced flock of our own. For winter is coming, and even in Arcady it will be chill work piping on the

hill-side then." So Love has granted Strephon his week, or rather Strephon has taken it, with or without the deity's permission. And there has been more lute-playing, with the usual background accompaniments—lambs, laughter, garlands, kisses, crooks, rosettes! At length the leaves have begun to come down with a vengeance, and the apples to tumble about like nine-pins. As for poor Phillis, she is all of a shiver. Her draperies, indeed, came from the flimsy spring stock of an Arcadian Autolycus. The waning season will plainly be the death of her, habited as she is. "See, Strephon, how blue she looks about her pretty finger-tips, which you have so often compared to rose petals. Up, Strephon, up and away! For very pity thou must face rich uncle Menalcas, and that without further loss of time. A most unpleasant talk of it, thou wilt have, my forlorn swain, with thy sordid relative!"

Now let us endeavour to apply all this to our hero, as, in the brownest of studies, he trudged lingeringly back to the Priory.

Here was Richard forced at last to face the actualities and to gauge the consequences of his flirtation with Salvia Richmond. He was, in effect, now on his way to make Sir Sidney the confidant of his love affair. Yet the nearer he got to his uncle, the more unsuited did that uncle seem to become the recipient of a confidence so romantic. Inasmuch as Sir Sidney's views on the relations of the sexes were those of a gentleman of the Regency; in fact, his code on such matters had been formulated, and indeed practically illustrated, by our fourth great George of blessed recollection. The aroma of that happy period still breathed through the porches of Sir Sidney's memory. The Baronet understood women under two aspects, and no more: the mercenary, advantageous, or matrimonial aspect—three names with him for the same thing; and, well, we will say the *convivial* aspect. Now, how on earth was Richard Leyland to translate his own state of mind towards Salvia into a dialect which Sir Sidney could have any chance of understanding? One



thing the dandies of that glorious period have denied to exist, and one thing their lineal representatives by apostolical succession of to-day still deny to have any existence, and this is—disinterestedness. And yet the human race yesterday, to-day, and for ever is grandly and pervadingly disinterested; only these padded apes refuse to see this power, common as air, moving and sweetening the world. Are all men selfish because they are selfish? Are all men blind because they have bandaged their eyes?

Now Sir Sidney was no worse than many others of his day and of his order. He had been tutored, as Horace says, from his tender nail in a certain code of sentiments. Every one with whom he had at all intimately associated had believed or professed to believe that code. He had never heard it questioned. It had become with him irrefragable.

Sir Sidney's views, then, upon a certain section of ethics being notoriously lax, it was not unnatural that Richard's ideas upon those same points should seem to his uncle those of


a milksop and a recluse. Add to this that his uncle was steeped to his fine finger ends in caste prejudices. A Leyland, however poor, was a Leyland still; and his nobleness obliged him, pauper as he might be, to restrict himself in some degree in conferring the honour of his alliance. In what terms, Richard began to torture himself with considering, should his announcement of marriage with the village parson's daughter be made to the white-handed, sprucely attired, curled, and artificial baronet, who measured all heaven and earth according to the canon of the gospel of Pall-Mall? To this high-bred gentleman, with a total moral blindness upon the subject of love-making under its more etherealized aspects, Richard could but feel that his tenderness for a girl without fortune or connections would seem mere folly and infatuation. A Leyland possessed, in bearing that name, a commodity of a certain value in the matrimonial market; clearly it was that Leyland's duty not to bestow his hand without some equivalent. To Richard of the

empty purse, the kind of return which he should exact was obvious. A monied young lady without family, the great house of Leyland might graciously condescend to affiliate. A long purse atoned for a short genealogy. But what adoption was possible, where both ancestors and assets were indicated by a zero quantity? How would Sir Sidney comment on such a text in the bay window of his favourite club to a group of other gentlemen of the old school, his exact doubles, even to the curl of their hat-brims? Alas! Richard shuddered at the very idea of his lady-love being appraised and discussed in such a circle at all.

Thus the more despondent Richard became, the more Alps and obstacles of difficulty kept presenting themselves. An hour since, it seemed child's play to make his announcement to Sir Sidney; now, merely to roll together beforehand the sentences of his communication had become a labour of Sisypheus. Yet his say must be got out somehow. He had pledged himself to Salvia that, before seeing

her again, his uncle should be consulted ; when suddenly it struck our lover all at once, that he, too, knew mighty little of this young lady with whom he was on the brink of an engagement. Quite as a new discovery, this reflection presented itself, and began to suggest a retinue of other unpleasant misgivings in its wake, until—here was the Priory front door, and here was the obsequious Logwood holding the folding valves apart for him to enter.


These rambling and corrosive reflections, which had chafed Richard during his homeward saunter from Stonesdale Ridge, succeeded thus in reducing him, by the time he reached his chamber at the Priory, to a strangely irritable and despondent mood. Now nothing depends more upon physical causes than mental depression. Richard had overdone himself by rising at cock-crow, long before any Priory housemaid had opened an eye, to despatch some literary hackwork sent down from the *Lucubrator* office. He had half tired himself out before the breakfast



hour ; and, as the weather was stormy, and nothing was to be done out of doors, he continued to drudge at his task till the afternoon, with only one short break for luncheon. Then the day improved, and he had met Salvia at their usual Alpine trysting-place. On his return, towards dusk, the mental fatigues of the morning began to re-assert themselves with added interest. We have seen the sombre colour of his meditations at this period. He was, in fact, in the worst possible frame of mind in which to encounter any severe shock or annoyance.

On his bedroom table two missives lay awaiting him. They had both come in by the afternoon post, during his absence with Salvia. Could Richard only have deferred receiving the worst of these letters until next morning's mail, half its sting would have been lost. Let no man, overwearied, have to face a worrying letter late at night. Go to bed, my friend, disagreeables will always keep till sunrise. To-night you are a pigmy ; to-morrow you will cope with them as a giant.

But, naturally, it never occurred to Richard then to interpose any such delay regarding these two communications. Indeed, with respect to the first letter, whose seal he broke, it was only too mildly harmful to require any such precaution. It was a rather futile, yet wholly well-meant admonition to look before he leapt into the irrevocable. Richard's recent epistolary rhapsodies on the subject of *Salvia* had been so thorough and importunate, that Davenant Browne had felt himself bound to assume the pen of remonstrance. He therefore indited a friendly croak of caution, and ventured to sound a muffled alarum of circumspection. The young lady rhapsodized might be adorned with all the attributes which her lover piled upon her altar; but again, she might not. Had she good temper, method, a kind heart, and other prosaic bag and baggage, without which equipments the life-journey would prove a perpetual wrangle, full of heartburnings and discontent? And so further, for two more pages in the same admonitory key.



The other letter had an evil and curious look. It lay in a soiled envelope, and was sealed with a slovenly seal, with outlying tears of sealing-wax round its ragged margin. The hand was cramped, approaching print, and leant over the wrong way. It bore merely the Stembury post-mark. "Now, who on earth," thought Richard to himself, "cares to correspond with me in Stembury?" So he shuddered, why he knew not, and proceeded to loose the seal. He read but three lines, and then flung down the paper as if a viper had bitten him. He held, in fact, one of those epistolary snakes—the anonymous letter.

Have you ever received one, reader? The first experience in that way certainly deserves to rank in anything like a complete catalogue of the more serious shocks and ills that flesh is heir to. It is quite a sensation to itself—a numbing, noisome, reptilian sensation, as if a cobra capella were climbing up your sleeve. This form of correspondence is most dear to Thersites. Canidia finds it singularly convenient. There is not a cowardly, currish

knave, or a spiteful, foulminded hussey in Britain, who has not thrown poison behind this ægis of impunity. The mere sending of an anonymous letter ought to be a legal felony.

The present Stembury specimen of this noisome class Richard discovered to run as follows :—

“ If Mr. Richard Leyland is merely making a fool of Miss Salvia Richmond by all this open-air and dairy-maid sweethearting, which is provoking so much comment in Blankshire, his present correspondent can only implore him, for the sake of public example, to arrange their meetings for the future in a manner less calculated to cause a public scandal. But if Miss Salvia Richmond is making a fool of Mr. Richard Leyland, who believes her to be all which her superficial gloss of simplicity has already deceived some other credulous young men into thinking her; in that case, the writer wishes, in the interests of truth and justice, to state to Mr. Leyland one little episode in the past history of Salvia Rich-


mond, of which he can hardly be aware. A few years back, his *inamorata* suddenly left her home, under the protection of a strolling German vagabond, by name Emile Pflieger, who professed to be a music-master and teacher of languages. She was fetched back by her doting and injudicious father, and received forgiveness *after being absent a week*. Mr. Richmond found her in Pflieger's company, in some low sea-port town, in a coffee-house frequented by mariners. As a sample of Pflieger's antecedents, it may be mentioned that he was tried for poaching upon the land of Sir Sidney Leyland, and duly convicted. Need more be said?

“ A LOVER OF JUSTICE.”

That was all ; and surely enough and more than enough ! Richard finished his perusal with a kind of moaning gasp, something between a sob and a sigh. The chamber seemed absolutely to reel with him at first. Then a dimness began to gather across his eyes. He caught the table edge with both

hands, just in time to save himself from falling backwards. Presently he was himself again. There lay the horrible, pitiless words staring at him in their almost printed clearness. There lay things written, in shameless black and white, about her whom he had worshipped as a saint, to whom, not merely sin, but the thought of sin, seemed impossible. Had the letter contained these words, "Take Richard Leyland, and chop off his head in half an hour!" he could not have been more utterly thunderstruck.

As soon as he could command a tolerable composure, he tried to think out and test this disastrous communication judicially. His happiness lay wrecked; but he would not be blinded with fury nor unreasonable. He had received certain definite and terrible accusations against the woman on whose purity he would have staked his existence. What now did he know *pro* and *con* in the matter? On what grounds had his previous adamantine faith in Salvia been based? He would be fair now, cold, critical.



He would show no favour to his past infatuation, if this it had been. He approached the subject at last with unscaled eyes. Alas! he knew nothing of Salvia beyond her beauty, and what she had chosen to tell him about herself. Certainly, all she had told him was blameless enough—yet, hold! Crushingly it came upon him that she *had* told him about this very German lover of hers; nay, more, she had preserved a stubborn reticence upon this very subject; and, when questioned further, had flashed out into keen anger, and merely said, that Richard had on this theme no right to inquire. By Heaven, the letter must be true after all! He had no sooner called Salvia into court than she stood almost convicted on her own unsolicited confession. And this, then, was the meaning of the cherished garnet ring! O abysmal hypocrisy of womankind! O perfidy unexampled, and yet so sweetly masked in the lilies and roses of innocence! And who was the mysterious hero of the treasured keepsake after all? A gerund-grinder, a fiddler, a poacher! Some-

thing of the Leyland pride curled Richard's lip as he said it. This was the vagabond, for whose dear memory this ten-penny, trumpery bauble never left Miss Richmond's hand! This the rogue, whose clumsy Teutonic idioms still entangled the sweet music from her lips! She was but a common, clay-wrought Circe, after all. The pert, giggling wenches in the courts and alleys of the town were her sisters, and hardly worse. She was the skilfuller actress, it was true; that made her more dangerous, not better than they were. How nicely she had taken him in! How gloriously she had befooled him with her simplicities! Thrice-sodden idiot that he was, to expect to find a stainless Una sitting on the bleak hill-side, ready to accost any stray passenger! Siren, he had called her to his friend upon her cairn of death. Siren was she truly in a sense more bitter and more shameful. The wandering German had come to her, no doubt, by that same sheep-walk. The German's welcome had been even kinder than his own.

He struck the table with his hand, and made his hand bleed, as he thought of it. He would trust no woman again. He would never again lisp the soft nonsense of love. They were all alike. Blankshire would, after this, be unendurable. He would rush back into his old house of bondage at the *Lucubrador* office. He would bury himself under mountainous Pelions of hackwork. He would drudge himself into an oblivion of his discomfitures. He would lease himself out for ninety-nine years to a bookseller; some starving, drunken author of the Goldsmith period had done so. He would sell his brain to Glossop, and die in a garret at his desk. And yet, might it not all be an infamous fabrication, and might not Salvia really be what Salvia seemed? The thought came like a chord of music across the fires of Tartarus, on which his mind was vexed. Then rose on him again the terrible shadow of the ring—that strange and strong corroboration. The writer of the letter could not know that Richard held that clue. There-

fore the writer wrote truly. Salvia was false, false, and false again! And he, a cheated, hoodwinked fool, sat there with his quivering hands before him, staring upon her written condemnation. Still, he would give her one chance more; in one further respect he would test the accuracy of his anonymous informant; an easy proof, which he need hardly move a limb or reach out a finger to make.

It wanted half an hour to dinner-time. The dressing bell was just ringing, and he heard frequent steps passing and repassing in the corridors. He could not in his present mental agony sit through the ordeal of that solemn three-hours' banquet. With such a load upon his mind, small-talk would be a torture and an impossibility. Then he knew that the rural dean, the master of the fox-hounds, and other county notables, were that night expected to swell the festive board. He had, in fact, noticed the shovel hat of the former, and the hunting-whips of the latter, on the Breccia marble slab in the entrance hall

as he came through. With Salvia false, what were all the shovel hats in Christendom to him? The foxes might chase the Blankshire squires for all he cared, in his present mood. Why should he put himself on the social rack by appearing? He could not swallow a mouthful of food. The '25 claret would taste to him as ditchwater, and the "Comet" port like diluted ashes. Vanity of vanities! It was like feeding a sick man out of a golden cup. He would plead indisposition, and absent himself. Oh for a friend now at his right hand with whom to take counsel, and advise! In all this rambling house there was none to whom he could turn for ready sympathy. In all this splendour none to give him consolation in his present supreme need.

But his second test of the letter, so easy to be made, would be thus. Richard knew that Sir Sidney always passed along the corridor in which his chamber stood, on the way to his own room. His uncle's toilet was a serious affair, and was always punctually attended to. Richard, therefore, set his door

ajar and waylaid his uncle. He still mechanically held the fatal letter, from which he seemed as if he could not shake his hand free.

Presently, as he expected, came the baronet's approaching step. Richard met him outside and began. "I have a racking headache to-night, uncle. You must kindly excuse me at dinner."

"You look as white as a sheet," replied Sir Sidney, carelessly. "I wished you to make Mr. Holster's acquaintance; so it is a pity you can't put in an appearance. Holster is quite the kind of man to know. He has a wonderful hand with a horse."

Richard murmured suitable regrets at his inability to be presented to this illustrious character.

"Send down word to Logwood," pursued the baronet, "and tell him to take your chair away. I hate a Banquo seat. It looks like a tooth out in the table. Good night." And Sir Sidney was passing on.

"One moment, uncle," interposed Richard,

arresting him, and paler than ever. "I have rather an odd question to put to you."

"Then ask it at once," fidgeted Sir Sidney; "I am late already, and I do not like to keep church dignitaries waiting. Ah! you ought to know the rural dean."

"I ought, indeed!" sighed Richard, mechanically, with his attention far away. "I liked his——" Richard had nearly said "hat very much;" but he turned it off into a cough.

"And this question?" reminded his uncle, pettishly.

"Is about a German."

"Man alive, I have no time for Germans now."

"Did your keepers ever catch a German, a kind of music-master, poaching on your land?" As Richard propounded the query so vital to his happiness, one could hear the letter he held rustling and grating against his coat-cuff.

"A German poacher?" meditated the baronet, beginning to unbutton his waistcoat

and take out his watch and chain. "Let me see. Oh yes! I remember the incident now perfectly. The bench convicted him. I recall that it annoyed me considerably at the moment. But this was not an affair of yesterday. My memory is bad for dates; but it must have been some time ago, I fancy."

"Some years ago," supplied Richard, quoting his informant, and setting his teeth as he awaited his uncle's reply.

"Exactly. Some years ago. I can't bring it nearer."

"That is quite sufficient," returned Richard, smothering a groan.

"A stomach attack, I suppose?" said Sir Sidney; "you seem in pain."

"I think the part affected is higher," returned Richard, grimly humorous.

"Send a groom for Ricketts," advised his uncle, "if you get worse—the Redburn apothecary, you know. He does my household by yearly contract, so you need not hesitate." And Sir Sidney passed rapidly on to his abridged toilet.

Richard flung himself down heavily upon a chair, and swore that he would inquire no further. The letter was true. Why should he probe this disgraceful business deeper? The girl was proven worthless; what did he care to learn any more of the sickening details? The letter *must* be true, inasmuch as it was sent to one who had every means of testing its accuracy. The slander, also, was far too circumstantial, far too scathing, to be pure invention. No one would dream of accusing a clergyman's daughter in this fashion without a groundwork of truth. Then, too, old Mr. Richmond was the very man to allow a daughter to run wild. Had not Richard himself been meeting Salvia day by day on the Ridge, while that purblind conchologist was sweetly and wholly in the dark as regarded their intimacy? He was just the clergyman to have an eloping daughter. Pah! The letter was true. Twice Richard had tested it. He would rid himself of the girl at once. How? That was the next question. Should he meet Salvia to-

morrow, as agreed, on Stonesdale Ridge and tax her with her shame? An ugly thing to do, a dangerous thing to do, an uncertain thing to do. She would perhaps confess and fling herself with tears upon his forgiveness. That would be embarrassing. Richard was not adamant. Even in this, the midmost storm of his anger, he felt that Salvia, armed with all the hysterical batteries of a beautiful and seemingly repentant woman, might conquer him, knowing even all that he now knew. Her father had forgiven her, her outraged lover might forgive her, too. A precious close would ensue. He would ascend the hill to denounce her. He would descend it engaged—engaged to whom? A girl that he could ask no decent woman of his acquaintance to visit!

Suppose, on the other hand, Salvia denied everything? Suppose, after the manner of her sex in their worst straits, she had a plausible and specious excuse ready? Suppose she had recourse to those numerous subterfuges and equivocations, with which Nature

arms the weaker portion of humanity in times of exposure and difficulty? Things would be even worse thus. No; he would write. If Salvia had anything to say in her defence, let her write it back to him. If she accepted their rupture in silence, her guilt would be, of course, abundantly established.

To Salvia, then, a letter must go. What should he say? The phrase of the letter, after all, mattered very little. He merely wished to say that his eyes had been opened, and that all between them was at an end. The first words that his sense of injury supplied would speak more home than any cut and dried formulas of repudiation. He dashed off the following lines :—

“I shall never sit beside you more upon Stonesdale Ridge. You are beautiful; but you tread a man’s heart to fragments under your feet as if it were an old autumn leaf. I forgive you. I know everything. I could not ask my aunt to receive you, and, therefore, we must meet no more. I know that you have despised me, and have played with

me as a simpleton ; that your love was pretence, your sighs hypocrisy. I know that you have been laughing at me in your sleeve all this while. Yet I loved you for all that. Now you will laugh at me again, and louder. I heed not. Farewell.

“ RICHARD.”

This completed, Richard threw himself as he was upon his bed, and so tossed and turned through the hot autumn night till daybreak. In a few snatches of broken sleep he seemed to be struggling with a gigantic German upon the brinks of unfathomable precipices. Great icy summits were pinnacled around. A sickly white moon swam between two of them. Below, there yawned an infinite chasm. He wrestled and wrestled, it seemed, for hours and ages with his opponent ; he had nearly pushed him over, and was feeling the fierce wild beast thrill of victory in his heart ; he saw the pale brute face and the thick lips of his adversary tightening into an expression of horror ; when a silvery, sudden laugh rang

close behind them. It was Salvia. At her sight he became as a dead man, all his strength withered away like wool. With one hand she caught back the sinking German, and with one cruel finger, lightly—lightly pushed Richard into the infinite horror of air below—and he fell, and he fell, and looking upwards he saw the German, with his arm round Salvia, pointing laughingly down the abyss!

An evil dream! When the sun rose, Richard flung up the window, and let the rich morning breathe into the room. He had not taken his clothes off. The mere mechanical trouble of undressing in times of great misery is intolerable. Now, he would rush out and try the effect of air and exercise. The whole Priory was as yet asleep, and no door would be unbarred for several hours to come. But his room was only some eight feet above the garden turf, and upon this he easily let himself down. He meant, first, to drop his letter to Salvia in the village post-box.

As he traversed Redburn it seemed a city of the dead, ay, a town in which all the men had perished of the plague. Every window-blind was closely drawn. Not a human soul was abroad. Richard was startled at the echoes of his own footsteps. He posted his letter; and now Salvia and he were separated for ever. Yet he would take heart and steal one glance at the vicarage, and at the chamber where she slept—perfidious! He walked twice round the house, wretchedly enough. Why did not some kind vision whisper to Salvia to waken? He picked a little sprig of jasmine from the porch, and laid it in his pocket-book. Then, as if angry with himself for this relenting act of tenderness, he strode fiercely away; and, shaking off the dust of his feet against Redburn and all its inmates, he sauntered aimlessly down the road towards Tamerton.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LAWYER AND HIS SHADOW.

MR. SATCHELL had taken the opportunity, which he had predicted he should take, of again running down, though not this time from London, to report progress to his client. He was now closeted with Sir Sidney Leyland.

The intervening six weeks had wrought no differences whatever in the outward man of the attorney, except that on this occasion he had arrived immaculate of Blankshire mud-spots. His wisp of a necktie looked a turn more limp, and its edges a trifle more frayed. His deportment, though still arid and unexpansive, seemed a shade sprightlier than on his last visit.

It is to be presumed that Sir Sidney had also noticed this slight infusion of cheerfulness, for his client was saying, "I think you bring me better news this time, Mr. Satchell? I am sure you do. I never knew a man who reflected more the prosperity or adversity of his case in his demeanour."

Satchell rubbed his hands. He was evidently gratified by the compliment. "Thank you, Sir Sidney," he returned; "thank you. I do certainly endeavour to saturate myself with any prominent business of this kind, which our firm takes in hand. I have, so to speak, been absorbed in Julian Leyland, deceased, these few months past. In short, I become my case, Sir Sidney." And the attorney smiled, coughed, and dusted his knees with an Indian silk handkerchief.

"And you have got some clue?" inferred his client, drawing his chair closer. "Mr. Satchell, you are quite invaluable."

"That is as you shall judge, Sir Sidney," Satchell went on, "and as you are good enough to estimate my report. But I think there will be something in it."

“Proceed, Satchell ; proceed.”

“I will take out my notes, with your leave, Sir Sidney, and help myself along with them for a—ahem—walking-stick. My last note I take first. It is, ‘Priory ; bed ; roads hardly safe.’ Exactly ; can you oblige me with a shakedown here for the night, Sir Sidney ? I mean any kind of bed, and any kind of bedroom, as I fancy I was watched at Stembury station ; and, having some property about me, I may just as well not move hence after nightfall.”

“This is becoming interesting !” exclaimed Sir Sidney, ringing the bell ; as the butler appeared, he added, “Of course, we can put you up. Logwood, let the room between the rural dean and the master of the hounds be prepared for Mr. Satchell.”

Exit Logwood to instruct the housekeeper.

“Much flattered, I am sure,” thanked the attorney, with a bow ; “a servant’s attic would have done amply. But to be interposed between the church and the chase, in the persons of such distinguished guests, is indeed an honour.”

"We will broach a bottle of the '11 'Comet' port," said Sir Sidney, in high good humour.

Could it be possible that there came an actual twinkle into Satchell's eye at the suggestion? Could one so shrouded in the mantle of legal impenetrability have revealed such a passing gleam of human frailty? We must surely have been mistaken.

"Mr. Gilbert Archer, Sir Sidney," commenced the lawyer, pausing here to bespeak his client's attention.

"Julian Leyland's friend?"

"Ay, Sir Sidney. You must know that Mr. Gilbert Archer has not improved upon further study and inquiry. In fact, I don't like Mr. Gilbert Archer at all." And the lawyer gave a most resolute jerk with his head.

"You thought at our last interview," the baronet hesitated, in a somewhat constrained voice, "that this Archer might have robbed, or—well, might have robbed Julian."

"You shall judge, my dear sir, for yourself,"

was Satchell's rejoinder. "I wrote to this Gilbert Archer, and directed the letter to the care of the steward of the *Norfolk*, the emigrant ship in which he is alleged to have sailed. I wrote to the steward personally, as well, asking for a description and any particulars of a passenger named Gilbert Archer, whom they had carried out on their last voyage. Also, would the steward use all means to ensure my enclosed letter coming to Archer's hands at his then, or last known, colonial address? I registered my communication to the ship's steward; having also put inside a five-pound note to refresh the zeal of that marine official."

"I am burning to hear his reply," threw in Sir Sidney.

"By the last mail," narrated the attorney, "two letters reached our office. First says the steward, 'I remember Gilbert Archer well among our last batch of emigrants—a short, squat fellow, with a club foot and black, curly, greasy hair. He spoke with a strong Irish brogue. I have ascertained his present

address, and your letter has been posted thereto. It is sure to reach him. His chief friend on the voyage, and probably relative, was a young certificated schoolmaster, who came out with his wife to take charge of one of the Colonial Government schools up the country. I readily ascertained the schoolmaster's whereabouts, and to him your letter has been despatched. I beg to thank you for your welcome compliment,' and so forth. Thus far the steward. Now here is Mrs. Dredge, Julian's landlady's counter-description of Archer. She has seen him frequently. 'Rather tall, with figure broad and burly; both feet perfectly formed; very light flaxen hair. No Irish brogue.' On which I note—inference, No. 1. The man, who sailed to Melbourne as Gilbert Archer, was clearly not Gilbert Archer."

"There has been foul play somewhere," ejaculated the baronet, striking the table with his clenched hand. "Then Archer is in England?"

"My good sir," entreated Satchell, placing

his fingers on Sir Sidney's arm, "be composed. We shall alarm—the rural dean!"

"But about Archer, Mr. Satchell?" fretted his client. "Do relieve my suspense. It is intolerable."

"Archer is, no doubt, still in England," the attorney allowed, reflectively stroking his chin. "But the question is, where? Let us consider what will be Archer's present position; in fact, let me become Archer. I am in England under an assumed name, with a lump of money in my possession. To stay in England, of course, I must change my name. Then all this money will hamper me, because, being able to give no account of myself, I am afraid to make any show with it. You may take it from me, Sir Sidney, that Archer is restless and migratory."

"But your other Australian letter," reminded the baronet.

"I stand corrected," said the lawyer, searching his coat-pocket. "Ay, ay, the schoolmaster's reply should have come before, though it only confirms what we know

already. Dear me, my friend, where have you crept to? Oh, here we are. I had tied you up again with the marine official before you were done with. Blunderheaded that! very."

Sir Sidney, in spite of his impatience, could not help looking amused.

"Ahem! Our colonial schoolmaster," read out Satchell, "acknowledges the receipt of my favour, which awakens painful associations. The young man named Gilbert Archer, with whom he was intimate during the voyage, parted from him in Melbourne harbour. Schoolmaster has since heard that Gilbert Archer has taken to the Bush, a circumstance which the antipodal pedagogue much regrets; and in that sorrowful vein begs to remain mine obediently. Which, of course, is a complete shuffle, and not creditable to one, who is about to develop the mental powers of the colonial Anglo-Saxon. We shall get, to adopt a vulgarism, no further change out of the schoolmaster."

"And we are landed in a blind alley ourselves," observed his client, with a frown.

"Hear me out, Sir Sidney," was Satchell's rejoinder. "In this dilemma, I composed what may be called a tentative advertisement. I inserted this some dozen times in some half-dozen papers before I raised my fish. Here it is : it seems nothing ; but, I assure you, it cost me some sleepless nights in Gray's Inn Square. 'Club-foot in Australia, to G. A., in England. I have had to come back. There were urgent inquiries on foot for you out there. You ought to make the return journey good to me. It is safer, I suppose, we should not meet. But send any further instructions to "Bowman," Post-office, Shepherd's Bush, London, W.' Now what do you think of the general effect of that, Sir Sidney? Remember how little I knew to build it on."

"Highly artistic," commended the baronet, as Satchell handed him a newspaper, in whose "agony" column the above was neatly printed. "And so that brought down your bird?"

"N—no, Sir Sidney, no. I just heard him chirrup. Nothing further. My confidential

clerk went every day to Shepherd's Bush, where he found neither shepherds nor any bushes to speak of. He continued to call till the postmaster objected. Hickory had to smooth him down, by saying it was a young lady whose parents were obdurate, whom he expected to hear from. I bought Hickory a new neckerchief to brighten him up, but even then he did not look like a lover much. He moulds himself upon me, and gets my suits of clothes—in reversion."

"But the expected *billet-doux* came at last?" laughed Sir Sidney.

"It did, and began ungallantly enough," said Satchell, with a dry chuckle. "What say you to this?—'Hold your tongue. I send you ten pounds. More shall follow, if you are discreet. Seeing you is out of the question. Advertise on the first day of each month, if you have anything urgent to say, in the *Morning Telegram*.—Yours as you use him, PHILBERT.' The letter contained a ten-pound note. We had nicked the right man."

"Where was this letter posted?" cried the other, eagerly.

"London, of course. Trust our customer for that," replied Satchell, blowing his nose.

"And what then?"

"I offered fifty pounds reward for any information respecting the recent ownership of this ten-pound note, giving its number."

"You are indefatigable, my good Satchell."

"In consequence of which I have this afternoon arrived from Penzance," said the lawyer, calmly.

"From Cornwall?" exclaimed Sir Sidney, staring at him in amazement.

"To be sure," nodded the attorney, dropping his voice. "A hosier in that town writes to me, that the identical note had passed through his hands during the last fortnight. So I thought I would run down in person and look the ground over. I returned this afternoon to Stembury station, not, I fancy, unattended."

"But, my good sir," exclaimed the baronet, rising hurriedly in a fuss, "ought we not to have this man who has dogged you, arrested? I am a magistrate, and the master of the fox-

hounds is another ; and the constable can be here in fifteen minutes."

Satchell shook his head. "It will not do. We shall spoil everything. I think there must be a gang. In that case my follower will be only a confederate, not the principal. It is, of course, most vexatious that my inquiries at Penzance should have alarmed the man for whom I was looking, before I had got any local evidence against him. But you know, Sir Sidney, what a small town is. If a man buys a new dog it is discussed. If Jones kills his pig there is a commotion over it. We do things better in Gray's Inn."

"Then you got nothing definite at Penzance?" supposed the baronet.

"Except disappointment," went on the lawyer, with a sniff. "From the hosier's the note passed into the leading local bank. They paid it out to a resident clergyman. He, like the rest of his cloth, was an execrable man of business, and had received this note with others. He could not remember (not he) how he had parted with this particular

note, but thought he had given it to his wife. The lady denied this flat, and seems to have gossipped my inquiries right and left. And that's about all."

"A curious chronicle," was Sir Sidney's comment. "I can't speak too highly of your perseverance."

"You are very good," said the other.

"And now we must dress for dinner," concluded the baronet. "Logwood shall show you your room."

Re-appearance of Logwood with a flat candlestick.

"And when you have taken Mr. Satchell to his apartment, Logwood, mention to the lady's maid to inform Lady Leyland that Mr. Satchell is staying to dine and sleep."

Mr. Satchell bowed and retired, Logwood conducting him.

Lady Leyland's maid was then in requisition at Lady Leyland's toilet, so that Logwood had to convey Sir Sidney's announcement to her ladyship through the further intermediation of the under-housemaid, ascending with

a hot water can; but the message did at length permeate to Lady Leyland's presence, whither we shall crave permission to follow it.

Lady Leyland was what is called "a fine woman;" that is to say, she had a good general effect; but, when taken to pieces or discussed in detail, there was nothing really fine or particularly elegant about her. Tall, upstanding, angular; people gave her credit for possessing a good figure, because most folks consider that height implies its possession. Sir Thomas Browne might have discussed this fallacy among his "vulgar errors," for it certainly is one. She had dull, leaden eyes, and regular but rather coarse and thick features. Her face was wholly without expression, her complexion of a pasty, heavy, unbroken whiteness. Lady Leyland in full dress made a good deal of her arms and shoulders; indeed, at a distance, Lady Leyland seemed chiefly arms and shoulders, and rich undulating velvets. Her hair was abundant, yet without gloss; and here again an evident coarseness took off from the effect of the

massive blue-black strands in which she wore it. In short, at her best, and especially by candle-light, her ladyship was a stately and showy personage enough, about forty years old at the present evening.

She suited Sir Sidney well, on nearly all accounts. She was not clever, she was not sensitive, she was not affectionate herself, and therefore required no exuberant affection from her husband. She was haughty, *non-chalant*, and never put herself out for other people. Consequently, the family dignity of the house of Leyland was perfectly secure in her keeping.

She was, indeed, if the expression be allowed us, a showy piece of wife-furniture. At the head of the table, behind the great silver-gilt racing urn, she seemed exactly the kind of article for the head of a baronet's table. The gold racing tankard in its turn seemed also just the kind of article for the centre of a baronet's table. It was difficult to decide which of the two was most native and appropriate to its place. Conversation was

not Lady Leyland's *forte*. These kind of women never do converse well. It is not required of them. They have a distinct *métier* in life. One does not expect the racing tankard to be amusing. No, it stands on the table for show.

Last night's dinner at the Priory was a fair sample of a Blankshire banquet; and there a mistress of the house who had talked brilliantly would, ten to one, have offended her guests instead of conciliating them. In the country people dine to talk and not to listen, and a hospitable hostess should as soon think of shortening their rations as of engrossing the conversation. To illustrate our position. Last night the Honourable Thomas Holster had occupied the chair on Lady Leyland's right, and had, indeed, taken her ladyship down to dinner. Well, something in the soup—it was a spring soup, of mixed ingredients—had reminded Mr. Holster of a certain noted run during the last season with the Blankshire hounds. This topic proved so fruitful, that, allowing for episodes, interrup-

tions from the rural dean, and intervals for nutrition, Mr. Holster had only run Reynard to death in the open just before the dessert. On Lady Leyland's left had been placed the Reverend Titus Westcott, B.D., who, whenever Holster gave him a chance, by feeding or pausing for breath, enlarged appropriately to his hostess on a contested election to the burial board in his parish. When he had triumphantly defeated the candidate of the Dissenting interest, Westcott passed to a moot point in the law of dilapidations. After this, Holster took up the running with such persistency that the clergyman only got one more conversational chance. This, however, he utilized by a somewhat lengthy biography of his late churchwarden, an official whose chief earthly aim—if Westcott's memoir was reliable—seemed to be to compliment his rector. So passed the dinner; and both Holster and Westcott, at the conclusion of the evening, pronounced Lady Leyland an agreeable woman. She had, indeed, maintained a graceful attitude of attention in turn to each

of them. When they both were speaking at once, she discreetly and impartially looked straight before her at the racing tankard. Surely, in county society such a woman was a crown to her husband!

Besides her physical advantages above set forth, Lady Leyland had material resources sufficient to recommend her in a very eminent degree. She had brought her husband nearly four thousand a year in her own right, and about three thousand acres of land in Lincolnshire. She was the daughter and sole heiress of Anthony Palmer, Esquire, of Radgate Hall, in that county. Her father had died shortly before her marriage to Sir Sidney. The accession of her fortune had quite rehabilitated the embarrassed baronet. For the second time in his life Sir Sidney had completely run himself dry. On the former occasion his dead brother had set him on his legs again. This time he looked out for an heiress, and with his usual luck found exactly the kind of woman suited to his emergency. Dorothy Palmer was a hard and worldly girl,

dimly and dully ambitious, with an impassive temperament and blunt susceptibilities. She had no tastes, no pursuits, no accomplishments, no interests. She was perfectly contented with herself, and this made her not unamiable. She was stolid, and therefore got credit for being extremely good-tempered. The marriage was thus one of the purest self-interest on both sides. It suited her well enough to become a baronet's lady, to lead Blankshire society, to wear the Leyland diamonds (the Palmer family had none), to be mistress in a grand old Elizabethan mansion. It suited Sir Sidney well just then to cut down the expenses of a villa in the northern environs of London, and to bring home a handsomish woman, who gave him far less trouble than her suburban predecessor; and whose fortune enabled him to pay off his more urgent liabilities, and to reduce the rate of interest, on such debts as he left remaining, from eight per cent. to four.

Yet, even Dorothy Leyland had her

romance. Once, and once only, had she taken the soft infection of love. An heiress does not find it easy to marry. This sounds a paradox, but we will explain. Such a young lady's self-importance, backed by the persuasion of her relatives, always determines to exact from a suitor, who is to be accepted, a good matrimonial equivalent. Now wooers who can furnish this, generally can afford to marry to please themselves, certainly come forward few and far between. At all events, nothing eligible in lover's shape had found its way to Radgate Hall, in remote Lincolnshire, until Dorothy Palmer had already turned thirty, and was past her girlish best. Not one offer had she received. The "detrimentals" were afraid to propose, the eligibles did not care to. Dorothy's wealth was as yet only in reversion. Anthony Palmer still flourished, and was on the whole one of the most cantankerous country gentlemen in East Anglia. It was as yet wholly uncertain how long he would be spared to make himself disagreeable. His daughter had not come

into possession ; and any present aspirant for her hand must make up his mind to submit to be harried for a season by his amiable father-in-law. All this was doubtless to some extent hard upon Dorothy. Even her placid nature became fretful and discontented, when she found that she had struck twenty-eight, that climacteric of incipient old maidenhood, still unwooed, and certainly unwon. But now her hour had come, and a lover, though one peculiarly ineligible, had at last presented himself.

Squire Brook, their next-door neighbour (the two parks almost joined) had a puny hydrocephalous son. There was no chance of the boy making either a cricketer or an oarsman, so it was no use sending him to either of our great athletic academies, miscalled public schools. The cub was accordingly educated at home by a tutor, and time hung heavily on that tutor's hands in rural Lincolnshire. Gilbert Archer was young, sharp, and rather good-looking. He brought high testimonials to Mr. Brook ; but, beyond this

fact, neither his employer nor Lincolnshire in general knew aught of his antecedents. On one occasion, when Tommy Brook discussed the question as quite an open one, whether or no his tutor ever had any parents, Archer had seemed greatly confused; the fact being that Mr. Archer, senior, was a small grocer in Inverness, and a person whose existence generally his aspiring son wished to obliterate. For young Archer had got prizes at a Highland grammar school, had picked up his rudiments cleverly, possessed a ready tongue, a plausible exterior, and meant to better himself. Therefore, when the youth had reached twenty, he did not care to remain under the parental roof any longer. He had a soul above tying up sugar in white packets and weighing out tea into blue ones. He scorned the inglorious occupation of his forefathers. So he took that high road to England, with which one "Mr." Samuel Johnson so cynically twitted his compatriots; and, following his star, he had drifted down in due time to Lincolnshire, as governor to heavy-headed Tommy Brook,

who, beyond rats and stablemen, had neither knowledge of life nor interest in it.

At this juncture, Dorothy Palmer had begun to lose hope and to despond. For the first and last time in her life she doubted the supreme power of money and acres. To punish her in this brief interval of scepticism, Fate sent the needy young tutor across the path of the heiress. In one of her country walks, her pet pug got his front paw into a rabbit-trap. The incident was ominous, and Archer stepped forward and extricated the howling animal. An acquaintance was thus begun, and frequent meetings ensued. Dorothy Palmer fell really and honestly in love; a woman of her temperament could not be violently in love; but, all the same, she was this time disinterested and earnest in her affection, so far as she had any to bestow. With Archer, who knew perfectly well what he was about, self-interest predominated, but he passably managed to get up a faint liking for Miss Palmer on his side. Indeed, it was such slow work in Lincolnshire, that any girl

to flirt with was a godsend. Then with a heiress wife, he would be landed for ever, and represent his native borough in parliament. His wooing sped like a house on fire. In a month they were engaged. They had agreed to elope, but he hesitated for want of funds. Anthony kept his daughter grievously short, buying even her stockings himself. Archer was waiting for his next quarter's salary.

While they were trembling on the brink of this run-away match, their secret transpired. Squire Anthony was furious. He raged like a bull—like a demon—like himself! He kept his daughter for a whole week under lock and key. The gamekeepers had orders to shoot down Archer if found within the precincts of Radgate Park. Then, cooling a little, her father swept Dorothy off by main force to a tour upon the Continent. But a mature daughter of thirty cannot be coerced like a girl of eighteen, and it is doubtful whether, after all, Mr. Palmer would have carried his point in making Dorothy abandon her lover, had not some of the detectives, whom he set


upon Archer's traces, unearthed the secret of the parental grocer's shop. Then Miss Palmer gave up her suitor, gave him up wholly, unreservedly—almost without a sigh.

Archer was base enough to threaten an action for breach of promise; and Anthony Palmer, under legal advice, to avoid the exposure, then settled a pension of eighty pounds a year on the reprobate, in return for a written renunciation of all claims to the hand of the heiress. On this allowance Archer mainly subsisted, for through the affair with Miss Palmer he had to throw up his Lincolnshire place. But the ex-tutor was always pestering during the remainder of Anthony Palmer's life for small additional subsidies, to the great detriment, if detriment were possible, of the old squire's temper. At Anthony's death, his brother Clement undertook the estate management, as his niece's trustee; and when Sir Sidney came forward and Miss Palmer married, it required not a little tact on her uncle's part to pacify Archer and keep him in the background. It was, of course, highly undesirable

that even the fact of his wife's love affair with the grocer's son should reach the baronet's ears. During the last few years, however, Archer had become too impecunious and importunate for even Clement Palmer's judicious manipulation; and, armed with his niece's concurrence, an intimation had been conveyed to her quondam lover that all remittances in England would henceforth cease, but that an increased allowance would be paid quarterly at an agent's in Melbourne. This brings us in Archer's history up to the date of our opening chapter.

Meantime, we left Lady Leyland attiring herself for the Priory dinner-table. The lady's maid was reporting to her mistress that Sir Sidney wished her ladyship to know that Mr. Satchell would stay to dine and sleep at the Priory.

"I am sorry to hear it," observed Lady Leyland; "Sir Sidney is always cross after seeing Mr. Satchell. This lawyer has been down too often lately. What can he be



coming about?" The last sentence was spoken in a lower voice, more to herself than to her waiting-woman.

"Mr. Logwood considers Mr. Satchell mean," hazarded the maid.

"I did not ask for the butler's opinion," said her mistress, disdainfully.

Now Miss Brimley, the lady's maid, was case-hardened to rebuffs of this nature. For one moment her mistress would be confidential, and another she would be distant. Poor Brimley never knew for two sentences together on which footing the conversation was to be conducted. "Logwood may be wrong," recanted the *soubrette*, in obsequious dust and ashes. "He was wrong about Miss Richmond's age, when he contradicted the coachman over it."

"Miss Richmond?" inquired her mistress, in a haughty, negligent tone of curiosity.

"Her as is the daughter of the Redburn minister," explained Brimley. "And they do say, my lady——" Here the maid paused, and leant forward from behind the chair to

scan her mistress's face, as she did not feel quite sure how the coming topic would be received.

"You are going to treat me to some of your dreadful gossip, Brimley," said Lady Leyland, with a careless laugh.

The maid took this as a permission to proceed. "And they do say, my lady," Brimley repeated, placing her mouth near her mistress's ear, "that Mr. Richard Leyland is very much took with this Miss Richmond."

"Do I know the girl?" asked her ladyship, with a languid accession of interest. "Is she at all handsome, Brimley?"

"Nothing to be compared with your ladyship," protested the lady's maid, loyally and stoutly.

"Never mind me," said Lady Leyland, smiling. "Is she handsome, I repeat?"

"She is well enough," admitted Brimley, disparagingly. "Oh yes, my lady; she is well enough for what she is. No grandeur, no air, no fine lady's manners. How should she, indeed? No moving of her hands about

as she talks, no changing of her voices, no condescension, no kind of sweep and swaying of herself as she goes along. She is well enough. Oh, well enough—in her place as a minister's daughter."

"A village beauty," said Lady Leyland, with gracious condescension.

"Oh! very much so," agreed the maid, rattling on; "she wants London boots, and London finish, and London milliners, and polish; in fact, she is—rustic, and when one has said that, one has said all."

"All this is her misfortune, not her fault," said the baronet's wife, benignly. "I do not seem to remember the girl."

"They say that she reads a great deal," continued Miss Brimley, with an air of patronage and allowance.

"She has nothing else to do, Brimley. No society."

"Reading is a pleasant occupation, my lady." This highly original sample of Miss Brimley's genteel small-talk passed without reply. "And she visits the poor very often," resumed the waiting-woman.

"That is her duty as a clergyman's daughter," said Lady Leyland. "It is odd that I cannot recall this girl's features. I must have seen her fifty times. I suppose she has shot up from a mere child within the last year or two? That must be the reason."

"She has shot up and filled out wonderful—like a young stirk," observed Brimley, hesitating for an appropriate comparison. For Brimley, with all her repudiation of rurality, was of bucolic origin.

"My nephew is only amusing himself," said Lady Leyland, absently. "I should be sorry to think there was anything more in this. You are brushing my hair rather too hard, Brimley."

"Will your ladyship wear the maroon velvet? I have basted in the point lace, in case you required it."

"As you have prepared it, I will," her mistress agreed, in an insipid voice, "and I suppose, as we are entertaining persons of county mark, Sir Sidney would like me to wear my diamonds."

"Your ladyship's skin requires lighting up," said Brimley.

"Ahem!" said her mistress, in a less gracious tone. "You are clumsy to-night, Brimley; the tiara sits quite crooked."

"Another hair-pin on this side," suggested the maid, inserting it. "There. You look like the Hempress of the Roosians in her shilling likeness. I don't think Miss Richmond could carry full dress."

"I am ready now," said Lady Leyland, arranging the sweep of her flounces behind in the cheval-glass. "I think that does nicely. I wish to see this Miss Richmond, Brimley, without her seeing me. My nephew will, I hope, remember his station. These intimacies with persons of a rank below one are often difficult to shake off. I am going down, Brimley; pass out first and open the door."

The maid turned to execute the injunction, and went from the toilet-table near the half-open window, for the autumn evening was sultry, into the interior and darker portion of the room. Lady Leyland, before following

her, gave a side glance into the cheval-glass, to scan the general effect of Brimley's labours. In the mirror she saw a curious thing—a ball of crumpled paper, the size of a child's marble, came through the opened window in a parabolic curve, and lit on the carpet at her side. Lady Leyland instantly set her foot upon it, and the maroon velvet flounces masked the intruder.

“Lord bless us!” exclaimed Miss Brimley, facing round from the doorway. “Whatever was that? Did your ladyship 'ear it?” When alarmed or excited, Miss Brimley lost all control of her aspirates.

“It was the falling leaves,” said her mistress, shivering. “The evening has changed to cold. Winter has begun early.”

“'Tis a treacherous season when the blackberries are ripe,” sympathized the maid.


“Very treacherous,” said Lady Leyland, rubbing her hands. “You need not wait, Brimley; I will go down alone.”

The instant the door had closed behind the waiting-woman, Lady Leyland sprang to the

casement, and threw up the rest of the window-sash. "Who is there?" she demanded, in a low, distinct voice, leaning out above the laburnums and rhododendra. No reply. A solitary bird was singing in a far-off thicket. Otherwise the night was still and breathless. "Whoever you are," she added, more vehemently, "begone! Instantly begone! or I will alarm the house."

She came away from the window now, trembling from head to foot. Wearily she flung herself down on a chair in the dimmest corner of the room. Now for the paper. She smoothed out the creased white pellet on the rich velvet of her dress. How the paper crisped, how the stiff velvet crackled in the audible silence. Here was the writing she found:—

"I have not gone to Australia. Your husband is hunting me like a partridge. I want shelter, sympathy, everything. I have tracked an old grey ruffian to your fine house to-night, who means to ruin me. Spy for me upon him, and discover how much he knows



and what measures he means to take. Get me his name also. Meet me to-morrow at dusk in your park by the broken Scotch fir, near the deserted gamekeeper's ling hut. You had better come for your own sake. I am desperate. You know my hand. There is no need of signature."

That was all.

"My own words have come upon me," she sighed, with a moan of pain. "These intimacies with those below you are never shaken off." She remained for a few moments plunged in thought. Suddenly she started up and rang the bell with vehemence.

Brimley fluttered back to the summons with concerned and astonished looks. "Mercy on us, my lady! what has come to you?"

"Nothing, nothing," said Lady Leyland, dreamily. "I have taken cold; I have got a headache. Is there any new arrival to-night except Mr. Satchell?"

"None," replied the maid, with raised, wondering eyebrows; "none but Mr. Satchell. Well, if ever! I never saw your ladyship look so pale—quite like a whited sepulchre."

“Never mind my looks!” said Lady Leyland, almost fiercely. “Brimley, my mind is changed. I will wear no diamonds to-night. Get me out a plainer gown.”

“There is no time, my lady; the dinner bell is ringing.”

“I tell you there is!” hissed out her mistress. “Tear off this finery! Get this thing away from my head at once! Never mind pulling a few hairs out! My black silk evening dress! The dean must wait! the hunter must wait! that mischievous lawyer *shall* wait! Here, bustle away, Brimley. I wish I was dead!”

“Lord have mercy!” said Miss Brimley, dashing briskly about. “Whoever would have thought it? Have you been working yourself up along of that twopenny Richmond girl, or what? Well, I never! That it should come to this!”

CHAPTER IX.

VENUS CONSOLATRIX.

ON the morning after the "Lover of Justice" had denounced Salvia Richmond to Richard Leyland, Mrs. Atherton and her daughter Edith sat at breakfast in the dining-room of Tamerton Grange.

To them enters Thomas, the present page and late crowkeeper, bearing a plate of pats of fresh butter, each neatly seated upon a currant leaf and marked with a cockle-shell.

"I think, Thomas, the butter might have been in time," spake Mrs. Atherton, severely.

"It's a matter of two miles to Farmer Digweed's," Thomas extenuated, breathing heavily. "And I was afeard to run, least-ways I should melt the pats."

"Another morning start in time," returned Mrs. Atherton, frowning. "Thomas, you can retire."

The ex-crowkeeper, however, hovered irresolutely, and balanced himself from leg to leg. "If you please, missis," he faltered.

"Speak out," exclaimed Mrs. Atherton. "What has come to the boy?"

"If you please, missis, I've seen him."

"What 'him,' Thomas? Pray explain yourself, my good lad."

"Him as you holloed for me and the dog to chivey out. Him as you counted the spoons and forks arter. That there Rylands, to be sure. Drat him!"

"You don't say so, Thomas?" exclaimed his mistress, keenly interested. "And where may you have seen Mr. Leyland? You have done quite right to mention this circumstance, Thomas, quite right."

Thomas, pleased at the commendation, gave his front hair a rub against the growth and grain, and chuckled audibly. "I could drop on him with the constable under twenty

minutes," said Thomas, with a boldness beyond his years. "It's my belief that Rylands is broke up, and cannot move far. Pass the word, missis, and it shall be done."

Mrs. Atherton bit her lip. Edith hid her face behind the newspaper.

"Do not instruct me, boy, what ought to be done."

Thomas quailed at the reproof, and began to rub his eyes with his knuckles.

"I ask you again," repeated Mrs. Atherton, "where you saw Mr. Leyland? Now don't stand wool-gathering there."

Thus adjured, Thomas proceeded tremulously. "I seed 'un a-setting, all in a heap like, on the second milestone out of Redburn village. His chin was a-rested on his two hands, and his elbows on his knees. He seemed to see nuthink, and to notice nobody. You might," added Thomas, mildly, "have knocked him on the head like a sparrow, afore he would have offered to move. And as to his eyes, they wos as red as ferrets'."

"The boy is mad," interposed Edith, hurriedly, "or dreaming."

"Nay, my love," said her mother, who had listened to the lad's narrative with more interest than incredulity in her countenance, "allow the boy to conclude his story. There may be something in all this; one never knows. Proceed, Thomas, proceed! And what did you do, Thomas?"

"I thought he wos a tramp," Thomas continued, "till I come right in front of him. Then I knewed him, all at a gush like, who he were, and—and——"

"You wisely took to your heels, eh, Thomas?" interrogated Edith, slyly.

"I won't go agen your words, miss," confessed Thomas, reddening. "I cooden well have faced him for the butter pats."

"You acted quite right," said Mrs. Ather-ton, encouragingly. "One moment, Thomas. Have you any idea why Mr. Leyland was sitting thus?"

"Drink," said Thomas, laconically.

"Begone, idiot!" cried his mistress, and the ex-crowkeeper vanished in tears.

Mrs. Atherton pushed the breakfast tray aside, and rose with decision in her aspect. "My own darling," she said, kissing her daughter, with a meaning nod. "We have not a moment to lose. Get your things on instantly."

"In the name of Heaven, mamma, what next?"

"I have seldom seen a lovelier morning for a walk," insisted Mrs. Atherton, as if the idea had just occurred to her, "and I must have some frilling by the afternoon. The Redburn draper keeps an excellent quality for a country tradesman; so you had better start at once."

"Well, I suppose any one may take a walk along the high road," said Edith, wavering.

"Remember my commission," said the mother, gently urging her towards the door, "and when you approach—a hem—the second milestone, I know I can trust all to your tact; eh, my darling?"

"I don't like it," exclaimed Edith, suddenly recalcitrant, and reseating herself. "I don't

like flinging myself in this way at Mr. Leyland's head."

"Let me tell you, my child," said Mrs. Atherton, with heightened solemnity, "that manners are changed now, and we must do as the rest of the world does. I happen to know as a fact that young men of property are not to be secured nowadays unless a girl chooses to fling herself not once but a dozen times at their head. The young men of position are so averse to matrimony, that, except a girl pesters them into taking her, she has no chance."

"All this is very disheartening," was Edith's comment. "What a weary, sordid, mercenary world it is! I wonder where I can have put my parasol."

"I know you only go to please me," said the mother, encouragingly.

"So be it," returned Edith, with a shrug of resignation. "But I may just remark that, if Thomas is to be trusted, Mr. Leyland seems to be in a curious condition. Have you considered, mamma, that Thomas's theory

might—it is not likely—but might be correct?”

“I am sure,” said Mrs. Atherton, shedding tears, “that I always found your poor father full of good humour on such occasions. Not that it happened above two or three times. But in this case I believe there is another cause; though, of course, he *may* have tried to drown it. Anyhow, something whispers to me that if a girl wants to get Richard Leyland, now is the day, and now is the hour. For Heaven’s sake! don’t sit there like a mute, but hurry on your walking dress.”

“But,” said Edith, as a thought struck her, “we have forgotten Miss Richmond all this time.”

“Speak for yourself,” replied her mother, bitterly. “I have been thinking of your *Miss* Richmond, as you call her, a good deal too much. I dare say—I dare say he has quarrelled with her.”

“If he has, he will not care to see me.”

“You don’t know men,” cried her mother, almost contemptuously; “you are a simpleton,

you are a baby. Why, of course, in that case, you must sympathize. Your common sense ought to tell you that."

"Well, mind, mamma, the responsibility of this—walk is on your head."

"Assuredly, Edith."

"Then I go most reluctantly."

"Bless you, my darling."

In twenty-five minutes' time after this conversation, any one less absorbed in his own miseries than was Richard Leyland, would have seen a graceful form in a most becoming walking dress rapidly approaching the milestone, upon which he had chosen to sit. He had hardly shifted his woebegone attitude, since Mrs. Atherton's page had passed him, butter-laden, on the wings of fear. As Thomas said, though Richard Leyland's eyes were widely and dreamily open, yet they conveyed little speculation to his brain about what passed him on that public way.

Miss Atherton's approaching footsteps Richard Leyland either did not hear or did not heed. The first thing that recalled him

to the outer world was a silvery voice, saying in sympathetic accents—

“Mr. Leyland! Is it possible?”

Richard staggered up from the milestone, and pressed his forehead. Edith appeared before him there like some “dew-bright exhalation” in the broad, hot sun-glare, and above the dust-drooping wayside docks and grasses. Within him, a batlike cloud of dark phantoms had kept rising hour by hour, in sombre and terrible contrast to the seething lustre and tyrannous excess of noon outside. Surely it is a mistake to say that grief is most terrible, most soul-piercing, in the tangible darkness of midnight. Not so; grief in the full golden glare of a shimmering summer field is far worse to cope with. Every flower stings with an association of our loss, every leaf is an index to point us back to the broken hope, every checker of sun-beam a mute reminder, each beautiful natural object a recall of some other loveliness, now lost for ever. O reproachful gladness of the bird; O hateful murmur of the honey-

moulding bee; O rich trail of cloud unbearable; O purple lines of sun-down, as blood-stained bars across the cruel gates of death! Nay, give the soul blank midnight to fight her sorrow in. Let her fence from her sight at such seasons the terrible bright Nature, singing and slaying, the chaos and riot of life.

But now Richard had brooded so long, and had conjured up so many ugly spectres, that when he saw her, whom of all others he expected there to see least, for a second he half fancied that, like some crazed eremite, he had called up in his wilderness a last, worse phantom than all before; worse, inasmuch as it wore so fair and divine a semblance—

“There came and look’d him in the face
An angel beautiful and bright;
And that he knew it was a fiend,
This miserable knight.”

This doubting state held only, it is true, for an instant; and then the kind hand extended, and the sweet, consoling eyes broke

his trance, and he was again in the world of actualities.

"Mr. Leyland," Edith repeated, softly, "how ill you look! What can be the matter?"

"I could sink into the earth with shame, Miss Atherton," replied Richard, "that you should see me in this demoralized condition; but—but I have just received a heavy blow."

"Not a literal blow, I trust?" she inquired, with a quick, pitying glance.

"Worse, fiftyfold!" he flashed out, knitting his eyebrows; "a mind-shock, a disillusion, a scathing and grinding calamity. I was trying to walk it off. I have walked off troubles less corrosive before; but this one would not be stamped out. So, like a sorry wretch, ridden to death by a nightmare, I have collapsed, and have flung my useless bulk down here exhausted, careless of where I was, or who might see me—like a drunken tramp; and I have frightened you, of course, and spoilt your walk. I ought to beg your pardon."

"I am very sorry for you, Mr. Leyland."

How much of woman's power lies in ringing the changes upon these few simple words! How many love affairs have begun from mere gratitude to a woman who is sorry for us, when we are in the deep waters of calamity!

"I cannot express to you, Miss Atherton," replied Richard, stammering with emotion, as he formed the words, "how thankful I am to receive a kind word from any living soul just now."

On this, Edith Atherton, without more ado, sat her down on a heap of macadam, and motioned Richard back to his milestone. "I won't have you stand a moment longer," she insisted, with marks of concern. "You are weak and ill, and of course you have had no breakfast."

"There is company staying at the Priory," Richard explained, colouring, "and I really could not face strangers just now."

"Well, I am not a stranger," she returned, earnestly; "and I do not intend to be one in future, if I can do any good in reasoning you

out of this despondency. Mamma may say what she pleases, but I mean to have my own way in this."

"I can never count you a stranger, Miss Atherton," said Richard, assuming an easier position; "even the first time we met at Mrs. Glossop's, I had a strange, undefined sense of having known you for years before. What I have done to incur your mother's displeasure, I know not."

"Mamma was abominably rude that day you called," interposed Edith, with a penitent blush. "If I could vicariously entreat your forgiveness for the dreadful way in which she——"

"Not a word more, Miss Atherton, I beg. You have made atonement, most ample atonement. There was some misconception, of course."

"It is a long story," she went on, tracing circles in the dust with her parasol, "and a tiresome one, of how and why mamma came to entertain this unfavourable impression of you, Mr. Leyland. I have more than half

already persuaded her that she is wrong. Her anxiety about myself makes her overlook all other considerations. Her one great fear is lest I should know some one whom I ought not to know. Even as regards my girl friends, you cannot conceive how particular mamma has been."

"She is right," struck in Richard, with emphasis. "Mrs. Atherton is incontestably and abundantly right. Girls, whose mothers are dead, are brought up anyhow."

"I suppose they are," agreed Edith, with a glance of surprise at his unexpected earnestness.

"As for a father's care," continued Richard, with scorn and contempt, "that means no care whatever. A girl may stray about all day for aught her male parent minds; and, for the matter of that, she may scrape acquaintance with any chance vagabond she meets, English or—foreign."

"I wish mamma could hear your eulogium," replied Edith; "it would do much to convert her in your favour."

"I speak from an experience too bitter, Miss Atherton, not to speak sincerely."

"You are beginning to look a little better, Mr. Leyland," observed the young lady, anxiously.

"I am nearly myself again," returned Richard, smoothing his ruffled hair; "the effect of your kind words."

"Then hear my proposition," she continued, with just a shade of hesitation. "I am on my way to Redburn to buy mamma some frilling—I dare say you don't know what that means. But, whatever it is, the frilling can wait, and I mean to turn back. And, if you do not mind walking with me to anywhere just short of our gate, I mean—now don't be offended—to bring you out some breakfast. There! My terrible plot is divulged." And Edith blushed very prettily, and cast down her eyes, and began to tap the road with the just apparent tip of her tiny boot.

Richard felt really touched at this good-natured and unconventional solicitude. "My dear Miss Atherton," he returned, "you are

an angel of bounty ! But I have gone without a breakfast fifty times before, and I shall only involve you in some unpleasantness with your mother. Otherwise, apart from the gratitude which I should be a cur not to feel—I could not deny myself the new and inviting sensation of being fed in a hollow trunk, like Millais's proscribed Huguenot, by hands as tender as hers of the daffodil-coloured gown."

"Now you must come and be fed," she insisted, with a musical laugh, "like Mrs. Bond's poultry. I can make it all right about mamma. You will not mind being for the occasion one of my paupers?" she inquired archly, as she concluded.

"Being a pauper already," said Richard, in a tone between jest and earnest, "and at present no one's pauper in particular, I will be your pauper, Miss Edith, with all the pleasure in life."

"It will be such fun," she explained, gaily ; "I shall bring you out some tea in my tin can, which went last to old Peggy Tasker with some gruel ; school-feast tea, you know,

ready mixed, milk and sugar and tea-leaves all boiled up together; you have no idea how warm the tin can keeps it. And my new pauper will want two round rolls, and a pat of butter wrapped in a currant leaf—these will come in a little hand-basket well known to pauperdom. And the pat of butter will be stamped with a cockle-shell, like the pilgrims wear in their hats, and——” Edith just checked herself in time from adding that, but for the pat of butter, she never would have found her pilgrim.

“I feel a most deserving case for out-door relief,” assented Richard, forcing a smile, and endeavouring to be cheerful. So he rose from the milestone, and she rose from the heap of macadam; and they walked away towards Tamerton, side by side.

END OF VOL. II.

